

Joseph de Maistre and his European Readers

Studies in the History of Political Thought

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VOLUME 5

Joseph de Maistre and his European Readers

From Friedrich von Gentz to Isaiah Berlin

Edited by

Carolina Armenteros
Richard A Lebrun



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FOREWORD:
THE BACKGROUND OF CURRENT MAISTRIAN
SCHOLARSHIP

Jean-Louis Darcel

Memento¹

"Let us know how to be suspicious; today it is the sign of a free, independent mind, especially in an intellectual milieu." Julien Freund, quoted by Pierre-André Taguieff.

In a colloquium devoted to Joseph de Maistre, whose objective is to look both towards the present and the future (in view of the *reappraisals/reconsiderations*), I intend to refer exclusively to the past, to my past as a researcher; it has no other value than that of an account. These remarks cannot by any means be compared with a conventional academic presentation and only represent my own personal reflections.

I encountered Joseph de Maistre, more than fifty years ago, by means of *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. I was charmed by the particular originality within French-language European literature, although this was not acknowledged as part of the canon of literary history taught at the ancient and venerable Sorbonne during my years of study there.

In particular, I was taught by two professors: Pierre-Georges Castex and Pierre Moreau. In March 1955, they participated in the examination of Robert Triomphe's doctoral thesis, whose publication in 1968 caused a sensation and became an academic work of reference.² These two eminent academics regretted the posture of doctoral student-cum-barrister adopted by Robert Triomphe, who conducted a posthumous trial of the author he had chosen as the subject of his study with a touch of arrogance. It was a lamentable distortion of the traditional image of academic critique, for the reader no longer knew if the candidate was acting in the role of historian of literature, lawyer, or judge. His reference to Henri Guillemin and to the post-war settlement could

¹ This essay was translated from French by Richard A. Lebrun.

² Geneva: Droz, 637 pp.

scarcely count as justification.³ “Hate is a bad counsellor,” one professor told me; “sympathy for his author is a necessary, though insufficient, condition for a fair and genuinely fruitful study,” another counselled me in agreeing to guide my first steps as a researcher.

To reveal the beauty of a work, the coherence of a thought, without concealing its dark areas, choosing to practice admiration, so dear to Cioran,⁴ rather than abhorrence. It seemed to me that this should be the line of conduct of a young academic broaching his subject, with a view to the large and lengthy *doctorat d'État* thesis (at least ten years before defence), which has nowadays disappeared in France: this is the ethic of an historian of literature, who, like a musician playing a piece of music, makes use of the work while respecting its creator and forbids himself from using it for other purposes.

I have assimilated the advice given by my first research supervisor, Professor Pierre Moreau, an elegant and subtle servant of the ‘romantic soul,’⁵ alas too soon taken away by illness. I found a successor of great calibre in Professor Jean Boissel, who supported me in this orientation and guided me in my journey up to the defence of my thesis in 1984.

Out of the Frying Pan...

Robert Triomphe's thesis was a landmark for more than one reason: due to the extent of its information, particularly on Maistre's stay in Russia, which was very much news in France and which was decisive in the genesis of his major works; because it made use of all the published documentation; and due to the innovative approach of the comparative method, which at the time was poorly represented in French universities, with the notable exception of René Etiemble, aptly confronting the literary and scholarly sources by which Joseph de Maistre was inspired: the Greek and Latin classics, French, English, Germanic and Russian influences, and finally the patristic and esoteric sources often neglected despite the work of Emile Dermenghem. However, the missing element in Robert Triomphe's work, without which all analysis remains purely hypothetical reconstruction, was that he failed to take advantage of the

³ Ibid., 8.

⁴ See the title given by E.M. Cioran to the new edition of his essay on Maistre: *Exercices d'admiration*, Paris, Galliamard, 1986.

⁵ Pierre Moreau, *Ames et thèmes romantiques* (Paris: José Corti, 1965), 314 pp.

writer's manuscripts and papers, all of which were carefully preserved by his descendants in two principal collections, then situated, one in Calvados in France, and the other in Piedmont in Italy.⁶ Following a probable blunder during his initial contacts with the family, Triomphe was denied access to these collections. As a result, he conceived resentment towards the Maistre family, suspecting them of wanting to hide shameful secrets. One can surmise that the initial bias against the author of *Les soirées* was noticeably aggravated by his being refused access to the major source of information, viz. the notes, preparatory work, manuscripts, and correspondence so essential to uncovering the man, the author, and the work as they actually were. The papers of a writer, when they exist, remain the indispensable access key for the critic. Someone who sees himself excluded from these documents may become resentful and be tempted to settle accounts for posterity... Hence the 600-page caricatured picture that too often rests on texts lent a single, even sought-out meaning, ascribed alleged motivations, and interpreted with poorly verified facts.

Since 1968, every reader of this large book has posed the question. Are we to believe that, for a dozen years in Russia, Maistre was no more than a husband happy to be rid of an ugly wife and cumbersome children, a Catholic whose Pharisaism permanently came to the surface, or a petty Machiavelli? The same question applies to each phase of his life: was he an eccentric or fluctuating jurist, an embittered magistrate, an opportunistic Freemason, a Tartuffe abusing the confidence of his Russian hosts to lead their children and wives away from their national religion, a socialite daubed with a motley erudition designed to impress women and weak minds, an intolerant even fanatic sectarian; an schemer seeking in a characteristically Jesuitical way to advance his pawns with the three monarchs whom, unknown to his own king, he tried to serve or influence, each of whom quickly learned to mistrust this cunning adviser; finally a writer, admittedly brilliant and profound, who consoled himself on paper for his political disappointments by debating with great opponents long since reduced to silence, such as Bacon, Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, or more recently, Kant? Of course I asked myself all these questions, thinking that some of the answers could probably be found in the public and private archives of Savoie

⁶ The French collection was transferred to the Château de Giry, in Val d'Oise, before being delivered to the Archives départementales de la Savoie in 1997.

and Piedmont, in the national archives of France, Italy, and Russia, and, above all, in the writer's papers. This was certainly the flaw in the imposing but artificial demonstration, in the brilliant but illusory dialectic that the academic employed in order to allay suspicion. Jean Rebotton and I, initially each following separate paths, embarked upon the patient work verifying the sources and documents. Then from 1972 onwards, we worked concertedly within the framework of the *Institut des études maistriennes*, which was founded by Professor Lovie at the Université de Savoie. We were soon joined by Professor Richard Lebrun and other academics. By cultivating the whole range of approaches and points of view, by forbidding ourselves any hasty, especially ideological generalizations, we endeavoured to put Joseph de Maistre back into the true perspective of his life in Savoie, followed by that of his successive exiles. By exploring the testimonies left by his friends and adversaries, above all analysing his notes, drafts, rough sketches, manuscripts and the secrets confided to his close relatives, we found evidence for his train of thought, the reasons for his actions, and the ins and outs of his works.

We preferred to believe in the sincerity of the man in his private and public engagements rather than to systematically cast doubt on it, unless proof to the contrary could be produced. Because of personal taste and fondness for the Savoie of former times, Jean Rebotton took charge of his youth and the Chamberian period, which represents half of the writer's life; I studied his successive exiles and the creation of his principal works. This large research project was made possible thanks to accessing the archival collection of the Maistre family. First of all, it was necessary to re-establish trust with the holders of the two principal collections of manuscripts, Counts Jacques and Pierre de Maistre, hurt by the discourteous methods used against them by arrogant or hasty critics. It was necessary to reach an agreement respecting the rights of the owner of the documents and the freedom of judgment of the user or the editor/publisher. In 1972, this protocol was finalised on Professor Jacques Lovie's initiative with the sponsorship of the Université de Savoie. Jean Rebotton and I had access to the whole of the archives inventoried by a team of academics at both Count Jacques de Maistre's home at the Château de Guiry and Count Pierre de Maistre's at the Château de Borgo. In 1996, this trusting, friendly collaboration of almost twenty-five years culminated in the delivery, followed by the gift of the entire collection of the writer's papers from the Maistre family to the Archives départementales de la Savoie. Today, the principal

collection is in the public domain, available for consultation locally in Chambéry, or even on the Internet.

... into the Fire

Isaiah Berlin constitutes another monument of critique, this time from the Anglo-Saxon world, whose essay on Joseph de Maistre originally written in English dates prior to 1960; the French translation was published in 1992 under the title of *Le bois tordu de l'humanité, romantisme, nationalisme et totalitarisme*.⁷ This study has had quite an impact, by means of its multiple translations and because of the notoriety of the author, one of the significant twentieth century historians of ideas and political science, and who could be considered as the counterpart of Raymond Aron in France. While Robert Triomphe presented Joseph de Maistre as a prophet of the past whose shadows too often hid real insights, Isaiah Berlin turns him into a "somewhat ultra-modern"⁸ prophet. He goes on to add that Maistre has "a blood-chilling vision of the future,"⁹ for he discerns in him "an affinity with the paranoid world of modern Fascism."¹⁰ The critique refers to the particularly sombre texts Maistre wrote at the time of the terrible battles waged by Napoleon in central Europe in which Maistre wonders about the future of Russia, to the haunting pages of *Les soirées* on modern war and its unprecedented massacres, about the indispensable role of the executioner as the keystone of civil society. Berlin sees Maistre as "a sharp, realistic observer of his own times,"¹¹ equal to Tocqueville, which, coming from Berlin, is no meagre compliment. By engaging in a radical attack on the Revolution that he presents as the daughter of the French Enlightenment, Joseph de Maistre attacks human reason wishing to make a *tabula rasa* of the past in order to erect an illusory earthly city on a purely rational contract. By so doing, he announces the rise of the irrational in politics

⁷ Albin Michel, coll. Idées, 1992, the chapter on Joseph de Maistre is found in pp. 100–174. [Original English version, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity: Chapters in the History of Ideas*, edited by Henry Hardy (London, John Murray, 1990), with the chapter on Maistre, pp. 91–174.]

⁸ Ibid., 104. [*Timber*, 96.]

⁹ Ibid., 109. [*Timber*, 102.]

¹⁰ Ibid., 119. [*Timber*, 113.]

¹¹ Ibid., 152. [*Timber*, 155.]

and, before his time, legitimates the dramas of the twentieth century. Thus reading Maistre's works reveals "the depth and brilliance of a remarkable, and terrifying, prophet of our day."¹² Such are the concluding words of this brilliant essay, which turns its back on common Marxist analysis and eulogizes democratic Anglo-Saxon society as opposed to the rationalism of the French Enlightenment, in particular that of Rousseau, in Berlin's eyes the father of modern totalitarianism for having chosen equality over liberty. Thus, Joseph de Maistre, condemning both the Enlightenment and the Revolution in the name of the principle of authority indispensable to the good functioning of the state, supposedly supports in advance authoritarian regimes present and to come. Thus, he could be considered as one of the inspirers of the bloodthirsty twentieth century dictators.

Needless to say, despite its recent editing and the aforementioned consultation with Richard Lebrun, the information in Berlin's essay dates back to the 1950s, as we are reminded by its editor, Henry Hardy. The essay published in 1990 was only subjected to a formal revision and some minor additions, without taking into account more recent documentation. So, the reader of the essay wonders about the relevance of a dangerously anachronistic reading that does not take into consideration the context, the creation of the work, or the motivations of the author of *Les soirées*. Like a modern Machiavelli, the latter becomes the lucid analyst of the totalitarian machinery set in motion by the French Revolution and the intellectual accomplice of tyrants to come. Is this the absolute freedom of a moralistic interpreter? Or the unacceptable distortion of the truth about a man and his work?

The media did not fail to exploit Berlin's essay by demonising the Savoyard theocrat. In the press, whether liberal or Marxist, many articles stigmatised Joseph de Maistre by sometimes presenting him as a supporter of absolutism and sometimes as one of the instigators of totalitarian ideologies. I will just mention one article from the Italian press, a literary page from *La stampa* of September 1994 devoted entirely to Joseph de Maistre.¹³ Either side of the portrait of Joseph de Maistre, on the left there was a photo of Isaiah Berlin and on the right one of Adolf Hitler. Underneath there was the heading *Il conte maledetto*, with the subheading *Un saggio di Berlin su De Maistre "padre" del fascismo*. After a summary of Berlin's essay, two less caricatured

¹² Ibid., 168. [*Timber*, 174.]

¹³ In the section *tuttlibri* – *Attualità*, September 1994, 3.

judgments followed, by the minister of culture of the time, Domenico Fisichella,¹⁴ and by Marco Tarchi. This demonstrates the great power of the press to turn a light-hearted analysis into a Manichean alternative: true or false, white or black... or red, good or evil.

Fragmentary Research

Jean Rebotton and I worked on Joseph de Maistre principally between 1970 and 1997. For various reasons, linked in my case to the duties and responsibilities of university administration, our research did not result in doctoral theses in due form as we had both envisaged; as a matter of fact, we defended our research work, he in 1983, and I in 1984, when, following the disappearance of the *doctorat d'état*, it was still possible to defend a thesis under the old system.

Each of us had produced some fifty articles, presentations, studies, and editions of works, which are consequently dispersed. However, the essential material was published in various issues of the *Revue des études maistriennes*,¹⁵ easy enough to consult. There, the reader will find our answers to the questions posed earlier. By confronting all the documents, whenever possible first hand, we have retained an image of Joseph de Maistre closer to that transmitted to us by tradition than the so-called re-evaluation of contemporary criticism. It is that of a well-behaved child, so to speak, gifted for study, fond of reading and learning. He received a strong Christian education that taught him the duties of those who have received much at birth and who have much to give. He practiced the Ignatian self-examination with his Jesuit tutors, which teaches one to be lucid with oneself as well as with others and encourages one to take life seriously. Throughout an entire part of him, not without suffering crises, he turns his back on Enlightenment and it is hardly surprising that, with the help of the Revolution, he saw the work of Satan in it.

His intellectual curiosity and the metaphysical questioning that he practised from his youth led him to frequent Masonic lodges and to

¹⁴ On Fisichella's work on Maistre, see in this volume, Marco Ravera's essay, "Joseph de Maistre and Italy."

¹⁵ Initially distributed by Belles Lettres until 1990, then by Librairie Champion up to the present. All the volumes, except volume 5/6, which is out of print, can be obtained from the University of Savoy, Laboratory LLS, 27 rue Marcoz, B.P. 1104, 73011, Chambéry Cedex, France.

join mystical Freemasonry: although he abstained from working there after the Revolution, throughout his life he cultivated an important network of Masonic friendships. He purified Masonry from its mythic rags, retaining only three missions, essential in his eye, from which he established the rules of his life: to use all possible ways (orthodox and heterodox) to probe the mysteries of creation and the creator, in a process associating faith and reason; to communicate this knowledge acquired throughout his life to those in charge of governing men in need of enlightenment by informed, discreet, and disinterested advisors. Whether consciously or not, Joseph de Maistre, identified himself with Mentor, Telemachus' educator and Fénelon's allegorical fiction, his model in politics, and each of his works can be read on three levels: one an esoteric reading reserved for the initiated; a second reading designed to serve the instruction of the Prince, *ad regis usum*; and, finally, a version for the public with the text of our common editions. Finally, he worked untiringly for the reunion of the churches by establishing relations that often become deep friendships with Christians of different denominations, where he nourished the partially concealed plan of bringing them back to Peter's boat. When it was not ridiculed, this role as secular missionary has often passed for dogmatism, or even fanaticism. This was probably the case, since he was often seen as an "inflexible and dogmatic" man among his best friends. Granted, yet this did not prevent him from establishing deep and lasting friendships with men and women among fervent Calvinists, Lutherans, Anglicans, or Orthodox, who did not hold his probable ulterior motives against him.

He was in the service of his sovereign, faithful to the end to the House of Savoie, despite a proposal promising a fine future in the service of Russia. After enjoying a degree of affluence in Savoie, he died poor in Turin. Was he a diplomat according to the prescribed rules? Certainly not. Moreover, "the indirect manner" that he cultivated to reach those in power during his troubled times was not free from ambiguity. Living in the contemplation of his interior world, the reality principle was not his strong point, even though he affirmed the necessity of experimental politics: "I am not made to act, but to contemplate," he confided to his daughter Constance. His diplomatic misfortunes partially stemmed from this. As a learned and honest man, he was respected wherever he went, but he was not considered reliable or realistic in his political analyses, too marked by "the metaphysics of politics." I like to think that his disciple, Charles Baudelaire, had him in

mind when he composed *L'Albatros*: there is a romantic hero in Joseph de Maistre. He had his *Chimères* and Gérard de Nerval's lines rather resemble him:

*Je suis le ténébreux, – le veuf, l'inconsolé
Le prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie.
[I am the dark one, the widower, the unconsolated,
The prince of Aquitaine whose tower was destroyed.]*

The proud solitude of the aristocrat despoiled by the Revolution, but also by his prince, renders his distress touching and also constitutes his weakness, which over the passage of time seems like a persecution disorder.

Was he what he wished to be? It appears not: the feeling of failure wore him down. However, each of us should give the response that he or she believes to be correct. It gives me pleasure, indeed, it is the satisfaction of an accomplished duty, to observe that many people throughout the world today want to provide their own answers, in all honesty.¹⁶

February 2008

¹⁶ See particularly the recent works appearing in French by Philippe Barthelet and Pierre Glaudes and the studies by Michael Kohlhauer and Bruno Berthier, who are continuing the research Jacques Lovie and I were committed to at the University of Savoy.

INTRODUCTION

Carolina Armenteros & Richard A. Lebrun

I

There may have been a time when Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) could have been pigeon-holed and nicely set aside as an exhibit of a Catholic and monarchical reaction to the French Revolution. Two major developments, however, suggest that the nature, significance, and influence of his thought requires reconsideration: the resurgence of religious factors in the contemporary global political situation, and an important new body of scholarship about Maistre himself.

Since the fall of the Soviet bloc, much public debate in the Western world has focused on the encounter between modernity and religious tradition. As traditional immigrant populations grow in Europe and North America and Judaeo-Christian traditions emerge reinvigorated, Western democracies face new political challenges in the form of religion's self-reassertion as a legitimate source of public reason. Switzerland's ban on minarets, France and Belgium's controversial policies on the wearing of the *burqa* and *niqab*, and the dialogue between Christian churches and various Western governments over abortion, euthanasia, world poverty, and freedom of conscience are only a few among multiple recent examples.

It would be a mistake, however, to conceive of these debates as variations on an age-old confrontation between convention and innovation, custom and novelty, with religious communities representing commitment to an immobilized past, and secular governments and groups the spirit of novelty and advance. Established in Europe at least since the time of the French Revolution, political secularity has itself become traditional like the religions it often confronts, a set of values, an ideology with institutions and a past to defend. Its exchanges with religions have also become so extensive that the philosophical community, following the lead of Jürgen Habermas, is increasingly averring that we live in a "post-secular society."¹ Nor are the religious currents

¹ See Jürgen Habermas, "Notes on a Post-Secular Society," <http://www.signandsight.com/features/1714.html>, 18 June 2008 (last accessed 20 July 2010).

that challenge secular worldviews in any way static and submerged in the past. Radical Islam, currently imagined as the West's foremost cultural enemy, is a revolutionary ideology with a brief history that began in Egypt in the 1970s. Despite its widespread ideological successes, its anti-modern foundations bear little relationship to the mainstream forms of the religion.² Tradition and modernity switch sides and fuse, to the point that it is often difficult, and sometimes futile, to tell which is which. Indeed the problem facing Western democracies today is definable less in terms of the confrontation between modernity and its supposed foes, than in terms of the relationship between religious movements and secular or secularizing states.

This relationship seems to be most intricate in Europe. This is both because Europe is the most laicized area of the Western world, and because it is experiencing within its borders the growth of Islam, a religion largely unconnected, from a historical point of view, to the invention of modern secular democracy. Within Europe, further, it is France, commonly referred to (along with the Czech Republic), as the region's most secular country, that is experiencing most profoundly the meeting between the values of the sizable Muslim minority and republican *laïcité*. Symbolically, France's current president is the author of a book entitled *La république, les religions, l'espérance* (2004).

In this political and historic context, the work and thought of the religious and Francophone conservative Joseph de Maistre acquires a new significance. A counter-revolutionary, a committed Catholic, and an intellectual offspring of the Enlightenment who thought deeply about Europe's historical and political identity, Maistre sought throughout his writing career to redesign, or at least to re-present, the role of religion in European politics and society. A providentialist and an early philosopher of history, he responded to the French Revolution by suggesting that the crucial question was less to know what to keep and what to discard from the past, than to discern, more complexly, how tradition and modernity interact through time, turning into each other, collapsing onto one another, and moulding political and social relations according to God's will.

For the past two centuries, the resulting synthesis has enjoyed an extraordinary vogue among European thinkers across left and right.

² See e.g. Gilles Kepel, *The War for Muslim Minds: Islam and the West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004).

Because Maistre borrowed from the Enlightenment while favouring a politics of social action and integration, his thought transcended political boundaries easily. It found as ready a home in the philosophy of Walter Benjamin (see Chapter 6) as in that of Italian historicists (see Chapter 8). The French Revolution also facilitated his international appeal. It turned him into a pan-European, taking him from his native Savoy to Switzerland, Italy, Sardinia, and finally Russia, where he remained for fourteen years as the special envoy of Victor-Emmanuel I, king of Piedmont-Sardinia. St. Petersburg in the early nineteenth century was a very cosmopolitan city, populated by people from all over Europe who had been carried there like Maistre by the revolutionary whirlwind. Maistre's *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* (1821) reflects this fact. Its three characters, modeled on Maistre and two of his friends, are of varying ages, political opinions, and European nationalities. Their only common bonds are friendship and a passion for the truth. As one of them says, the French Revolution has "come to tear out of their places thousands of men destined never to know each other," making them "turn together like the dust of the fields," so that "though our cradles have been so far apart, perhaps our graves will touch each other."³

The company and conversation of an international elite, coupled with the religious Europeanism that began to stir during the Napoleonic wars and culminated in the Holy Alliance of 1815, prompted Maistre to think about Europe as a political and religious entity with a common history. The scope and audience of his books concomitantly widened. The *Considérations sur la France* (1797) and the *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (1814), theoretically abstract pieces that dwelt mostly on France, made him known throughout the Francophone world. But *Du pape* (1819) voiced a Europeanist vision that spread through the continent from Spain to Russia. The mystical and syncretic worldview of *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* only added to this effect.

The present volume is a first attempt at assessing Maistre's influence in Europe from his time to our own day. The enterprise is, necessarily, far from exhaustive: Maistre has been so abundantly read and commented on by now that any effort to discuss his reception systematically

³ Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, ed. Pierre Glaudes (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 515.

could consume a lifetime. Circumstances have likewise prevented us from covering certain areas of Europe like Scandinavia, Central and Eastern Europe (excepting Russia, whose European status Maistre debated hotly (see Chapter 9)), and the Iberian Peninsula. The latter deserves to be explored especially, given that Maistre was read there mostly by traditionalists whose thought founded the regionalist ideologies that play a role so central in Spanish politics today. But our project is illustrative rather than encyclopedic. Its dual goal is to exemplify the wide diversity of the uses, philosophical and political, that have been made of Maistre's work, and to suggest the reasons why it has been read continuously across the centuries.

Fulfilling these goals is urgent. Ever since the triple publication of Isaiah Berlin's essay on Joseph de Maistre,⁴ the Savoyard philosopher has been known in the English-speaking world mostly as a father of fascism. Indeed this may be the view of him still held most widely by both non-Maistrian scholars and the general public. Yet, as Cyprian Blamires points out in Chapter 1, the fascists' pagan politics, focused on the glorification of violence, would have horrified Maistre. Nor would the atheism of Charles Maurras, his main French pro-fascist reader, have in the least attracted him. The seeds sown by thinkers often fall on ground they would never have plowed, thanks to the subjectivity of reading, of which Maistre was himself a living incarnation. He read always "with quill in hand, [annotating] and [commenting] in his notebooks [...], through a dialogue with the author whom he did not let go until he had proven him right."⁵ His intellectual posterity across left and right revenged his intellectual ancestors by absorbing his works with comparable partiality. The result is that, contrary to Berlin's suggestion, there was nothing inevitable about Maistre's fascist legacy. This is especially the case given that the fascists represent a small minority of Maistre's readers. Suggestively, of the 150 or so excerpts from the work of Maistre interpreters that Barthelet has encyclopedically assembled,⁶ only three—Donoso Cortés, Charles Maurras and Carl Schmitt—were by thinkers belonging to the extreme right.

⁴ The definitive version is found in Isaiah Berlin, "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism," in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*.

⁵ Philippe Barthelet, "Raynal sous le feu de ses adversaires: l'exemple de Joseph de Maistre," paper presented at "Raynal's *Histoire des deux Indes*: Colonial Writing, Cultural Exchange and Social Networks in the Age of Enlightenment," a conference held in Newnham College, Cambridge, 3 July 2010.

⁶ See Philippe Barthelet, *Joseph de Maistre: les dossiers H* (Geneva: L'Âge d'Homme, 2005).

The papers gathered together in this volume build on this insight. They show the very different portraits of Maistre that can be drawn by focusing on Maistrian interpreters who did not support the rise of totalitarianism. By illustrating the diversity of his posterity, they depict a conservatism apart, whose peculiar character is suggested by the range and kinds of political—or, in the case of Auguste Comte (1798–1857), trans-political—interpretations it invited. Indeed one of the striking features of Maistre's heritage is how abundantly left-wing and anti-Christian thinkers have utilized him. In this regard, he has accomplished what is perhaps a political thinker's greatest achievement—being read with interest, and theoretical profit, by one's enemies.

II

To appreciate the complexity of Maistre's place in the historiography of the Enlightenment, the Counter-Enlightenment, and the French Revolution, two major considerations must be kept in mind. In the first place, though Maistre was French in language and culture, and is often thought of as a 'French' writer, in fact he was never willingly a French subject or citizen.⁷ A native of Chambéry in Savoie, at the time of his birth a part of the northern Italian Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia, he remained all his life a subject of the House of Savoie. Though he is well known for his writings about revolutionary political developments in France, it is important to be aware that his personal political experience, in the first instance, had been in a state that in the eighteenth century had implemented its own version of 'enlightened despotism'.

The second consideration to be kept in mind is that ever since his own lifetime, Joseph de Maistre has been the subject of very diverse interpretations. With some simplification, it may be said that writers who approved the French Revolution and the ideas it embodied portrayed the Savoyard writer as a hopelessly reactionary and somewhat unscrupulous opponent of the Enlightenment and all that it stood for. Opponents of the Revolution, on the other hand, and especially French Catholic royalists, praised him as a brilliant critic of both the Enlightenment and the Revolution. It is only since the 1970s

⁷ To honour Maistre for the *Considérations sur la France*, Napoleon made him French against his will. See Maistre, *Œuvres complètes*, 14 vols. (Lyon: Vitte and Perrussel, 1874), 10: 409–10.

that the historiography has moved beyond this simplistic dichotomy (see the Foreword).

To put his experience of the Revolution in context, the basic biographical data should be taken into account. Maistre was, as has been noted, a native of Chambéry. Educated first by the Jesuits and then the local royal *collège*, he earned law degrees from the University of Turin, and then, like his father, served as a magistrate in the Senate of Savoie (the high court of the province and the equivalent to a French parlement). With the invasion of Savoie by a French revolutionary army in September 1792, Maistre fled Chambéry. He subsequently served as the Piedmontese consul in Lausanne (1793–7), where he also began his career as a counter-revolutionary propagandist, as Regent (head of the court system) in Sardinia (1800–03), and then as the Piedmontese ambassador to the Russian court in St. Petersburg (1803–17). For Maistre, the French Revolution meant the abandonment of an established and secure legal career, the loss of his property in Chambéry (including what had been one of the best private libraries in the province),⁸ and long years of exile. It meant separation from his wife and daughters for eleven years of his fourteen-year service in St. Petersburg.

Maistre's first major work, *Considérations sur la France* (1797), which offered a providential interpretation of the French Revolution, quickly established his reputation as a defender of throne and altar. His later works display a gradual shift of emphasis from politics to fundamental philosophical and theological issues. His *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (written in 1807 and published in 1814) generalized the political, philosophical, and theological principles on which he had based the *Considérations*. *Du pape* (1819) argued for infallible papal authority as a prerequisite for political stability in Europe. *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (published shortly after Maistre's death in 1821), explored a host of philosophical and theological issues in witty dialogue form, while an appendix, entitled *Eclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, developed his ideas about suffering and violence. Finally, his *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon* (not published until 1836) blamed the English writer for much of the scientism and atheism of the Enlightenment.

⁸ See Jean-Louis Darcel, "Les bibliothèques de Joseph de Maistre," *Revue des études maistriennes*, 9 (1985).

III

The utilitarian claims of the radical Enlightenment and the de-Christianisation campaigns of the French Revolution forced religious minds throughout Europe to defend traditional beliefs and institutions on the basis of their usefulness for modern society. Maistre's life's work was perhaps the most extensive intellectual defense of this kind ever made. Conceiving of the confrontation between tradition and modernity in religious terms, he characterized modernity as a spirit of negation, criticism, and increasing secularism whose deployment resulted in the destruction of tradition and, by extension, of society. In the long run, however—and this is an aspect of Maistrian thought rarely underlined—modernity's triumph would result in the arrival of an age of political peace.

To make these arguments, Maistre used the modern philosophy he decried. Like Rousseau (1712–78), the founder of Counter-Enlightenment whose thought he criticized while adopting,⁹ Maistre combated *philosophie* with its own weapons. Paradoxically, in fact—and this is one ambiguity that ensures his continuing appeal—Maistre was a reactionary only insofar as he was a revolutionary. Uninterested in reproducing the past, he looked hopefully to the future. And believing in 'progress,' he thought that human beings could transform themselves spiritually, morally and even physically through their rational efforts across the centuries. When it came to progress, in fact, Maistre was even more optimistic than the *philosophes*. But modernity frightened him because it tended to dissolve all interpersonal bonds, beginning with the bond between humanity and God. The moderns were apparently willing to turn individuals into manipulable objects and machines, developing their reason without expanding their hearts, and while corrupting their souls. Like Rousseau, however, Maistre believed that, if manipulation could not be avoided, it might at least be employed for good purposes. He was hence deeply moved by the desire to use religion to renew the old ties with new means.

⁹ On Rousseau as a representative of the Counter-Enlightenment, see Graeme Garrard, *Rousseau's Counter-Enlightenment: A Republican Critique of the philosophes* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003). On Rousseau's influence on Maistre, see Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'autorité contre les lumières: La philosophie de Joseph de Maistre* (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 199–226 and Carolina Armenteros, "Parabolas and the Fate of Nations: The Beginnings of Conservative Historicism in Joseph de Maistre's *De la souveraineté du peuple*," *History of Political Thought*, 28, 2 (2007): 230–52.

His Catholic apologetics, his spiritual works, and his final invention of political ultramontanist all belonged to this attempt to revitalize religion, to instrumentalize and refashion it as an agent of social reintegration very like the civil religion of *Du contrat social* (1762).

What is rarely remarked upon is that this was an inherently revolutionary project, a way of dragging religion into history, just as the Revolution had forced individuals to inhabit history. The goal was to retrieve and solder the crumbling bonds wrought by time and tradition, to recover artificially the genuine and spontaneous relations between people, free of self-interest, which had supposedly reigned in the past. Problematically, of course, those relations, and the machine that made them anew, were invariably modified in the process, and not always in pious ways.

The Revolution had yanked Christianity down from its pedestal and thrown it in the public sphere, stripping it of its intellectual privileges, reducing it to just one among many voices that had to struggle to command public opinion if it was to survive. Newly cognizant of its social powers and weaknesses, forced to argue for itself, Christianity had to reinvent itself as a tradition. In the process, it turned, inevitably, into a revolutionary force. It could no longer *be* and *do*, without need for self-justification and as a matter of course. It had to argue, fight, theorize. Obligated to apply itself to history, produced anew as a social and political tool, Christianity, which had once preached that one should set one's eyes only on heaven, found itself assigned the unprecedented task of manufacturing utopias on earth.¹⁰ Publicized and politicized, reforged into a political weapon, religion lost the ability to build communities in the quiet and unselfconscious manner that Maistre praised in pre-modern times. Even more, because many—Rousseau, Robespierre, Bonald, Saint-Simon—insisted that no other social instrument could do this better, religion became the ultimate manager of Revolution.

Maistre was keenly conscious of such changes, of this waning of morality by the will to know and manage it, which he blamed the Reformation for preparing, the eighteenth century for propagating, and the Revolution for bringing to a disastrous extent. It is less clear whether he was equally aware that he was perpetuating these trends himself.

¹⁰ For an account of the secularization of the search for happiness, see Darrin McMahon, *Happiness: A History* (Boston: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2005).

During his last years, he reconceived the Revolution pessimistically not as a past event, but as a historical epoch that had been perpetuated by the Empire, and that ruled more powerfully than ever during the Restoration.¹¹ He was conscious, in fact, that the “revolutionary spirit” had permeated everything—even his own thought.¹² But for our purposes what matters is that Maistre’s ability to collapse revolution onto religious tradition, to equate their social and political functions, and to posit them as the means to identical goals, is crucial to the continuing interest that left and right alike have taken in his works. This ability explains also the theoretical engagement that his thought has unceasingly compelled. With religion as history’s new director and as the key to diminishing political conflict over time, the impulse to innovation has lodged deep within Maistre’s thought from the beginning.

IV

Scholarship on Maistre’s reception is so far scant. Given his reputation as a precursor of fascism, it is perhaps unsurprising that his influence has been most consistently studied in the work of the Spanish authoritarian Donoso Cortés (1809–1853). Four pieces exist so far on the subject, linking Maistre to integralism, totalitarianism, and authoritarianism.¹³ The Maistre–Carl Schmitt (1888–1985) rapport is also comparatively well studied.¹⁴ Encompassing essays have also explored Maistre’s fate in Russia¹⁵ and the Anglophone world¹⁶ and

¹¹ See e.g. Maistre, *OC*, 14: 147, 156, 183 as well as *Du pape*, ed. Jacques Lovie and Joannès Chetail (Geneva: Droz, 1966), 24.

¹² Maistre, *OC*, XIII, 62.

¹³ Alberto Spektorowski, “Joseph de Maistre, Donoso Cortés and Argentina’s Catholic Right: The Integralist Rebellion against Modernity,” *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions*, 9, 4 (2008), 455–74; Alberto Spektorowski, “Maistre, Donoso Cortés, and the Legacy of Catholic Authoritarianism,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 63, 2 (2002): 283–302; and André Coyné, “De Joseph de Maistre, à Juan Donoso Cortés, et au delà,” in *Joseph de Maistre. Les dossiers H*, ed. Philippe Barthelet (Geneva: L’Âge d’Homme, 2005), 668–676; Rafael E. Tarragó, “Two Catholic Conservatives: The Ideas of Joseph de Maistre and Juan Donoso Cortés,” *The Catholic Social Scientist Review*, 4 (1999): 167–77.

¹⁴ Graeme Garrard, “Joseph de Maistre and Carl Schmitt,” in *Joseph de Maistre’s Life, Thought and Influence: Selected Studies*, ed. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal: McGill–Queen’s University Press), 220–40 and Jean Zaganianis, “Réflexions sur une ‘intimité’: Joseph de Maistre et Carl Schmitt,” in *L’Homme et la société*/2, 140–1, 147–67.

¹⁵ Vera Miltchyna, “Joseph de Maistre in Russia: A Look at the Reception of his Work,” in *Joseph de Maistre’s Life, Thought and Influence*, 241–70.

¹⁶ Richard Lebrun, “Joseph de Maistre in the Anglophone World,” in *Ibid.*, 271–89.

across nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe among thinkers like Adorno, Baudelaire, Mauriac, Maurras, Ricoeur, and Tolstoy.¹⁷ Pierre Glaudes' new edition of Maistre's *Oeuvres*, published together with a *Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre*, also suggests Maistre's diverse posterity: Ballanche, Barbey d'Aurevilly, Bloy, Camus, Cioran, Claudel, Comte, Lamartine, Lamennais, Larousse, Proudhon, Renan, the Saint-Simonians, Sainte-Beuve, Steiner, Suarès, Taine, Verlaine, and Vigny. The list alone should suggest that viewing Maistre primarily as a precursor of fascism is an impoverished and misleading approach to his significance as a thinker.

But nothing has made this clearer than Philippe Barthelet's immense, 877-page, in-4 volume, *Joseph de Maistre: Les dossiers H*,¹⁸ currently the single most important source for the study of Maistre's reception. Gathering together both excerpts and full pieces on Maistre from the work of hundreds of interpreters, blurring the distinctions between primary and secondary materials with unfailing thoroughness, it testifies to Maistre's colossally assorted European descent.

V

Turning now to a brief review of the sections of our volume, the first paper, which is placed as a Foreword, on the background of current Maistrian scholarship, should be read as an extended preface to the book and as an account of Maistre's reception in twentieth-century France. In this respect, it is intended as the complement to the second section of our volume on "Maistre in nineteenth-century France." In his "Memento," Jean-Louis Darcel, the person to whom contemporary Maistrian scholarship owes the greatest debt of gratitude, offers his very personal "recollections" of how contemporary Maistre studies began. He recounts how as a graduate student he was challenged and stimulated by Robert Triomphe, whose massive 1955 thesis on Maistre constituted a left-wing attempt to account for the Vichy regime.¹⁹ While acknowledging Triomphe's contributions to our knowledge of Maistre, Darcel demonstrates how Triomphe's work was marred by systematic hostility to his subject and lack of access to Maistre's manuscripts

¹⁷ Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Persistence of Maistrian Thought," *Ibid.*, 290–326.

¹⁸ Geneva: L'Âge d'Homme, 2005.

¹⁹ Published by Droz (Geneva) in 1968 as *Joseph de Maistre: Etude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique*.

and papers. Bringing modern Maistre studies to birth in the 1970s, Darcel and his colleagues Jacques Lovie and Jean Rebotton negotiated access to the Maistre family archives for qualified scholars, founded the *Revue des études maistriennes*, encouraged the patient verification of sources, the cultivation of diverse points of view, and the avoidance of hasty or ideological generalizations. Darcel took care to place Maistre in the context of his life in Savoie and in that of his successive exiles, and exploited the testimonies left by his friends and adversaries as well as by Maistre's notebooks, manuscripts, and letters to recover the development of his thought and his reasons for action.

Maistre has had a long presence in the United Kingdom,²⁰ but this first section of our volume focuses on the quite extraordinary impact that an essay by Isaiah Berlin has had in the past couple of decades. Cyprian Blamires, once Berlin's student at Oxford, argues forcefully and at length that Berlin's famous essay on Maistre (published in its definitive version in *The Crooked Timber of Humanity* in 1990), which portrays Maistre as a modernist rather than as a "prophet of the past" and claims that he was a precursor of fascism, is based on a misunderstanding of fascism and a misreading of Maistre's thought. Over the past twenty years, a scholarly consensus (to which Blamires himself has contributed) has emerged that fascism must be characterized as a type of revolutionary hyper-nationalism. On this definition, Maistre had nothing in common with fascism; he urged respect for existing institutions and opposed all revolutionary ideologies. As well, as an ultramontanist who contested national churches, he had no investment in nationalism. Berlin also believed that Maistre's preoccupation with bloodshed and violence presupposed their glorification in a fascist manner. Blamires maintains that Maistre's theories, far from glorifying violence, spring instead from a desire to minimize it.

The second section of our book explores Maistre's presence in nineteenth-century France, exploring how Maistre was taken up by two quite divergent writers, Auguste Comte and Jules-Amédée Barbey D'Aurevilly (1808–89). Comte himself wrote of his admiration for Maistre and the latter's influence on him has long been acknowledged, but Tonatiuh Useche Sandoval's careful analysis of Comte's reading of Maistre's *Du pape* shows in precise detail just what Comte picked up from Maistre and how the founder of sociology used Maistre to develop

²⁰ Lebrun, "Joseph de Maistre in the Anglophone World."

a theory of spiritual power that could be applied to all human societies. In contrast to Comte, Barbey D'Aurevilly 'worshipped' quite uncritically at the altar of Joseph de Maistre. The essay by Kevin Erwin studies the various ways Barbey modeled himself on Maistre as a literary critic, describing Barbey's unequivocal admiration of Maistre as writer, thinker, and, especially, interpreter of history. Barbey came to champion an anti-progressive form of historiography, conceiving of historical interpretation as an act of divination that depended on retrieving the 'soul' of history, rather than on describing its 'body' through facts.

The fourth section of this volume features four essays on Maistre's German readers. The first, by Raphaël Cahen, recounts how the publication of Maistre's *Du pape* influenced the development of counter-revolutionary thought in nineteenth-century Germany. Focusing on the correspondence between Friedrich von Gentz and his collaborators, Cahen shows Gentz's admiration for Maistre's ideas about Europe's Christian unity. Drawing on remarkably rich archival materials, Cahen recounts the impact that reading *Du pape* had on Gentz's thought and politics. He finds that *Du pape* informed extensively the Europeanist thought and conservatism of the "knight of Europe" during his 'Catholic' years. And he recovers the role, so far ill-known, that the Francophone conservatives and notably Bonald played in his political and religious development.

Maistre also influenced Gentz's Romantic contemporaries, although in more intellectual ways. In the second essay in our German section, Adrian Daub reconstructs for the first time the Maistrian model of the family and its influence on the history of German Romanticism. Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) (1772–1801), Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and Franz von Baader (1765–1841) all engaged with the model of the family that Maistre and his fellow counter-revolutionary Louis de Bonald (1754–1840) proposed. As they became more conservative with the years, the Romantics' acceptance of the reactionary family grew. Throughout, however, they injected this model of the family with their own vision of love. The result was an original synthesis that reveals their political attitudes to monarchy, religion, and Revolution.

The next two essays in this section explore Maistre's much more complicated relationship to two twentieth-century German thinkers, Walter Benjamin (1895–1942) and Herbert Marcuse (1898–1979). Quite remarkably, and perhaps appropriately, Ryohei Kageura's study of the indirect influence that Maistre exercised on Benjamin through Charles Baudelaire is a *tour de force* of intellectual detective work.

Kageura's analysis of Benjamin's writings on Baudelaire, and especially of Benjamin's ideas on the detective novel, discloses unexpected parallels between the Benjaminian analysis of modern society and Maistre's views on original sin, language, and Revolution. For Benjamin, the theology of original sin that pervades Maistre's political thought and Baudelaire's poetry is a precondition for the detective novel. There is also a filiation between Maistre's critique of Bacon's linguistics and Benjamin's analysis of detective deciphering. Lastly, Kageura argues that Benjamin's interpretation of Revolution is derived from Baudelaire, and thereby ultimately from Maistre. Concretely, the Maistrian idea of the reversibility of merits is the source of Benjamin's ideas on the paradoxical unity of mass leaders and revolutionary conspirators.

In his essay, Michael Kohlhauer uncovers the 'dialectical' reading of Maistre found in Marcuse's essay on Counter-revolution. Noting that essay's neutral language, Kohlhauer contends that Marcuse's reading was not polemical, but rather distant and dialogical. Uninterested in the Savoyard's politics, Marcuse used his anthropology and theory of authority as points of departure for a dual critique of fascism and total capitalism. Marcuse's Maistre is, firstly, an accurate observer of the historical absurdities that result from the mutation of political authority and, secondly, an astute critic of the social order engendered by Revolution.

Maistre's Italian posterity is the subject of the fourth section of our volume. Marco Ravera surveys the fate of Maistre's thought in a country whose existence he never thought possible, and with which he could not identify. During the nineteenth century, Italy returned his discourtesy by keeping silent on his works. The twentieth century was more forgiving, spawning interpretations of Maistre quite foreign to the rest of Europe and mostly inspired by the historicism that was a staple of twentieth-century Italian philosophy. Interestingly, while some of these historicists regarded Maistre as the exponent of a profoundly historical thought—of 'political historicism', 'progressive historicism', or 'dialectical historicism'—others saw in him an enemy of history.

If Italy repudiated Maistre for a century, Piedmont, which he served zealously all his life, repaid him with generosity. Ravera describes how Piedmontese philosophers applied Maistre's ethical, political, and religious thought to sustain a system of thought ill-known in the English-speaking world: ontologism.

The last section of our volume recovers an important aspect of Maistre's Russian fate. Carolina Armenteros' article uses Maistre's

previously unknown letters to Sergei Uvarov to reconstruct the intellectual context in which the two thinkers developed their theories of knowledge and education. She shows that Maistre and Uvarov shared a common intellectual language in the form of a philosophy of history that served as a conveyor of political debate in nineteenth-century Russia. Maistre and Uvarov's correspondence suggests this. When read in intellectual context, it reveals contemporary Russian controversies about Westernisation, freedom of education, political action, governmental control, and the relative status of classical, scientific, and encyclopedic knowledge. The result is a new set of insights into Maistre's influence in Russia and a new perspective on the intellectual origins of the Revolution of 1917.

The Afterword to this volume is José Miguel Nanni Soares' paper, which offers the first systematic account of the reception of Maistre's *Considérations sur la France*, the first interpretation of the French Revolution as a historical event. Beginning with Madame de Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution française* (1818) and ending with François Furet's *La Révolution en débat* (1999), Nanni surveys the different interpretations and uses that French historians and other historically minded interpreters of the Revolution made of Maistre's *Considérations*. He observes that, of all the Francophone interpretations of the Revolution written during the Revolution and against it, Maistre's is the only one that has not fallen into oblivion.

VI

Together, the essays in this collection draw a portrait of Joseph de Maistre very different from Berlin's. Far more than fascism's midwife, Maistre was a cosmopolitan thinker whose thought transcended time and place, a displaced *émigré* who combated and imbibed the 'revolutionary spirit' as he wandered across Europe in internationally mixed circles. His thought therefore responded to the concerns of a European-wide readership, and flowed abundantly over the bounds of political extremity.

Additionally, Maistre was a Europeanist who hoped that a new unity would arise on his continent and then spread to the rest of the world. *Du pape*, the most widely read of his works, helped to mould the thought of Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) and Auguste Comte (1798–1857). It recounted Christianity's making of Europe (see Chapter 3), and predicted enthusiastically Europe's imminent

wholeness. *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* and the *Eclaircissement sur les sacrifices* announced the same theme in more spiritual tones. Reflecting on the diverse origins of his little company of friends, the count of *Les soirées*, announces: “we march toward a great unity that we must greet from afar....”²¹ It is a socio-religious harmony that, as Marco Ravera observes, had very little to do with the primarily economic ties that finally bound the European Union (see Chapter 8).

Yet this Union now faces challenges posed by religion and political self-definition. In this context, Maistre’s prophecy acquires new meanings. One contentious issue that arose during the debates over the European constitution in 2006 was whether to acknowledge the continent’s Christian past. Another, less divisive issue that yet remains firmly in the background of European policy is the possibility that Russia—whose Europeanness Maistre and Uvarov discussed, indirectly but excitedly, two centuries ago (see Chapter 9)—might join the Union in the distant future.

A work of intellectual history, this volume does not pretend to offer any direct answers to these and similar questions about Europe’s future. But studying Maistre’s posterity can sharpen our awareness of how these questions arose, show some of the answers that were supplied to them in the past, and help to find ways of addressing them now.

²¹ Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, 516–17.



PART I: MAISTRE IN THE UNITED KINGDOM



BERLIN, MAISTRE, AND FASCISM

Cyprian Blamires

Introduction

Isaiah Berlin claimed to be retrieving Joseph de Maistre from the dustbin of history in order to demonstrate the modernity of much of Maistre's thinking. This demonstration of Maistre's modernity had two aspects. First, there was the typical Berlinian approval of important aspects of the brilliant and witty Maistrian critique of the Enlightenment which Berlin himself so enjoyed. That was the good news. The bad news was that according to Berlin, this Maistrian assault on the Enlightenment had a side so extreme and so unsavoury that it stank in advance of the gas chambers of Auschwitz. This 'modernity' of Maistre's thought—a thought largely forgotten in the Anglophone world by 1945—was being demonstrated by Berlin in order that the Savoyard could be held up to view as a proto-fascist. The context was of course the widespread search in the postwar years for culprits who could be blamed for the catastrophe of Nazism.

My aim in this paper is first of all to point out two hugely important positive areas more or less ignored by Berlin where the thinking of Joseph de Maistre was indeed and unquestionably prophetic of modernity: the emergence of sociology and the development of the role of the papacy in the world—and then to ask why Berlin chose to neglect these in order to focus on an area where the relevance of Maistre's thought is much more debatable and questionable—the emergence of modern totalitarianism.¹ I will then go on to explain why Berlin's attempt to identify Maistre with fascism seems to me to fail, when we take account of the results of modern investigations into what fascism actually was. In his chapter on Isaiah Berlin's Joseph de

¹ I suspect that Berlin's real target may not have been Maistre himself so much as the Catholic Church, given that the Catholic Church palpably comes into the category of those doctrines offering a single overarching explanation of reality that Berlin notoriously distrusted.

Maistre, Graeme Garrard alluded to this important issue but did not enlarge on it.²

I. Maistre's Anticipations of Modernity

A. Maistre and Sociological Thought

Joseph de Maistre's thinking was greatly admired by two non-Catholic readers who played a crucial part in the emergence of the modern discipline of sociology: Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon and his disciple Auguste Comte.³ In the aftermath of a Revolution that had shaken the foundations of European society, both men were fascinated by his arguments about the need for social cohesion and order, and intrigued by his appreciation of the lessons about such cohesion seemingly offered by the much-vilified Middle Ages. So powerful did Comte find this aspect of Maistre that he claimed to have discovered in the Savoyard an infallible criterion for judging the intelligence of people he met. If they appreciated Maistre, they were worthy of respect, if not, then not. In his new positivist calendar, Comte dedicated the 26th day of his eleventh month—which he wanted to be known as “Descartes”—to Maistre and Bonald.⁴

A truly pioneering spirit seeking in the 1950s (when Berlin first elaborated his thinking about Maistre) to retrieve something in Maistre's worldview of relevance to modernity might then have been expected

² Graeme Garrard, “Isaiah Berlin's Joseph de Maistre,” in Joseph Mali and Robert Wokler, eds., *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 2003), 117–31; here, p. 123. There is also a brief discussion of Berlin's treatment of Maistre in Richard Lebrun, “Joseph de Maistre dans le monde anglophone,” *Revue des études maistriennes*, 13 (2001): 91–110, here 106–108.

³ See e.g., Hans Barth, “Auguste Comte and Joseph de Maistre: The System of Positivism as Theocracy,” in *The Idea of Order*, trans. E.W. Hankamer and W.M. Newell (Dordrecht: Reidel, 1960) for the influence of Maistre on both Saint-Simon and Comte; Mary Pickering, *Auguste Comte: An Intellectual Biography*, 3 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–2009), 1:261ff.; Frank E. Manuel, *The New World of Henri St Simon* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1963 [Harvard University Press, 1956]), 262 (“Saint-Simon assimilated the traditionalist charges against the philosophes... Only he drew substantially different conclusions from the same evidence”); Jack Hayward, *After the French Revolution: Six Critics of Democracy and Nationalism* (New York, London etc.: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991). See also Cyprian Blamires, “Three Critiques of the Revolution: Maistre, Bonald, Saint-Simon,” unpublished D.Phil thesis, History Faculty, Oxford University, 1985.

⁴ See Barth, “Auguste Comte and Joseph de Maistre,” 111.

to look to the rich but neglected seam of his influence on the evolution of sociology (and perhaps also of anthropology) through Saint-Simon and Comte. Although some work has been done in this area to bring to light the enormous importance of Joseph de Maistre in the founding of sociology, I think there is still way to go. As long ago as 1947, Harry Elmer Barnes wrote:

The generally reactionary character of the political philosophy of the Romanticist writers on politics and law, such as Burke, Louis de Bonald, Joseph de Maistre, Ludwig von Haller, Herder, Fichte, Friedrich von Schelling, Hegel, and Friedrich Karl von Savigny, has led many to overlook the vital sociological note in their writings. They rejected the ideas of the rationalistic writers of the Enlightenment, who had expounded intellectualistic interpretations of the origin of society and the state as artificial products of conscious choice and deliberation. The Romanticists insisted that social institutions, government, religion, and the like are the natural outgrowth of an organic evolutionary development. *This encouraged giving more attention to the social and cultural foundations of all human institutions—a trend of a distinctly sociological nature* [my italics].⁵

Barnes admits therefore that political prejudice has clouded the ability of observers to grasp the sociologically pioneering thinking to be found in publicists like Joseph de Maistre. I must say I believe that this remains the case even today. It was his contemporary and correspondent Bonald who said that the Revolution was like a hurricane which had whipped up the waves of society to such a massive extent that the ocean floor—i.e., the normally hidden foundations of the social order—had been momentarily exposed to view, a powerful metaphor to describe the kind of fundamental reflection sparked by the enormity of the transformation in France's social fabric after 1789.⁶ It would be good to be able to report that since Barnes produced his huge survey of sociological theories, progress has been made, but the fifth edition of George Ritzer's *Sociological Theory* for example, published in 2000, does not even contain the names of Bonald or Maistre

⁵ *An Introduction to the History of Sociology*, ed. Harry Elmer Barnes (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 66–7.

⁶ See *Oeuvres complètes de M de Bonald, pair de France et Membre de l'Académie Française*, publiée par M l'abbé Migne, 3 vols. (Paris: Aux Editions Catholiques, 1864), "Sur la pensée de l'homme," 3: 447; cf. also R. A. Nisbet, *The Sociological Tradition* (London: Basic Books, 1979 [1966]), *passim* for Bonald and Comte; Blamires, "Three Critiques of the French Revolution," 215ff.

in its index.⁷ And yet the theme of the need for 'social cohesion' which so impressed Saint-Simon continues to be of great interest. Writing in 1998, one commentator observed that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the crumbling of the Iron Curtain consensus with its "fixed political bloc formations" had made the question of social cohesion even more important:

In the new world political era, the cultural resources that lead to social cohesion and the limits of that cohesion in our societies are of the utmost importance. It will be the primary task for societies to promote social cohesion as the basic source of economic development and ecological sensibility. The cultural foundations of society deserve our full attention as a basis of sustainable development.⁸

If you strip out the ecological considerations, this is precisely the central thought of Joseph de Maistre, writing in the aftermath of the French Revolution rather than in the aftermath of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

B. Maistre and the Modern Role of the Papacy

I don't think Berlin had much interest in sociology, he was mainly attuned to the history of political theory and the history of ideas, and he certainly did not choose to go down what would have been a most rewarding route of reflecting on the modernity of Maistre as a founding father of the sociological discipline. Nor of course was he much interested in the history of the Catholic Church, so he probably overlooked the fact that the development of the role of the papacy in the Catholic Church since the time of Maistre may be said to have proved the Savoyard's thinking about the fundamental centrality of the role of the papacy both in the Church and in society to be way ahead of his time. One only has to consider the title of a book like Derek Holmes's history of the modern Church, *The Triumph of the Holy See*⁹ to see how prophetic this central aspect of Maistre's thought was. In modern times

⁷ George Ritzer, *Sociological Theory*, 5th ed. (New York, etc.: McGraw-Hill, 2000). Nor are there any references to either in the index to a textbook like Lewis A Coser's *Masters of Sociological Thought. Ideas in Historical and Social Context* (New York etc.: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1971), which begins with Comte.

⁸ Werner Weidenfeld, "Preface" to *The Limits of Social Cohesion: Conflict and Mediation in Pluralist Societies*, ed. Peter L. Berger (Boulder CO/Oxford: Westview Press, 1998), ix-x.

⁹ Derek Holmes, *The Triumph of the Holy See: A Short History of the Papacy in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Burnes & Oates/Shepherdstown: Patmos, 1978).

the Holy See has attained to a level of religious and political prestige probably without parallel since the seventeenth century. Yet in Maistre's lifetime the Catholic monarchs had become so powerful vis-à-vis the popes that they could bully Rome into suppressing its chief support, the Jesuit Order.¹⁰ The political and moral influence of the papacy had reached a low ebb, and the French Revolution—along with Napoleonic crassness in respect of Pope Pius VII—played no small part in reviving its fortunes.¹¹ Even outside the sphere of the Catholic Church the role and prestige of the papacy in the political sphere has attained to considerable proportions, with some ready to attribute to John Paul II for example a key role in the downfall of the communist regimes of Europe in 1989.¹² I am not stating baldly here that Maistre's writings did actually exercise a significant influence on the development of the role of the papacy, but only that his conception of the role of the papacy was prophetic of the one that has prevailed in the modern era. In this respect he was far more of a prophet than his contemporary Bonald, for the latter persisted in preaching his version of the old Gallicanism well into the new century. He had not grasped, as Maistre had, that in the new post-Revolutionary world of the confessionally 'neutral' state, Rome would be the most important bulwark for the Catholic churches around the world.

II. Joseph de Maistre and Fascism

In the 1980s I wrote an Oxford doctoral thesis—as yet unpublished—on three francophone ideologues of the early nineteenth century; the thesis was entitled "Three critiques of the French Revolution: Maistre, Bonald, and Saint-Simon." I had the good fortune to be supervised for my thesis by Sir Isaiah Berlin. Since that experience of intensive

¹⁰ The trauma this caused in Maistre's family is well-known to his biographers; see Richard A. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre: An Intellectual Militant* (Kingston/Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 7.

¹¹ See e.g., E.E.Y. Hales, *Napoleon and the Pope: The Story of Napoleon and Pius VII* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1962). According to the blurb, "There were several factors that contributed to Napoleon's defeat... One that is often forgotten is the resistance he met from Pope Pius VII to his demands on the Church... as a result of his treatment of the pope, he was not able to count on the loyalty of large sections of his armies or of the civilian population in central Europe when he set out on his Russian campaign."

¹² This was acknowledged by no less an authority than former Russian President Gorbachev.

supervision by Berlin more than twenty years ago, I have had ample opportunity to reflect on his philosophy; and the question of his reading of Maistre has acquired added interest for me since I published a *Historical Encyclopedia of World Fascism* two years ago.¹³ I think Graeme Garrard is right on the ball when he writes that “Berlin’s association of Maistre with fascism has a highly sensationalistic ring to it, and is not supported by much explanation of what is meant by ‘fascism,’ the precise meaning of which is still highly contested.”¹⁴

Berlin is able to associate Maistre’s worldview with that of fascism because he interprets fascism as it was once fashionable to do, in terms of what it was *against*: anti-Enlightenment, anti-French Revolution, anti-intellectual, anti-Bolshevist, anti-pacifist, anti-liberal, etc.... In this he was to a large extent a victim of his times.¹⁵ Over the period of more than half a century since Berlin was framing his ideas about Joseph de Maistre as a forerunner of fascism, a huge amount of scholarly endeavour has been devoted to getting to grips with the fascist phenomenon as a powerful positive modern secular doctrine—one that Roger Griffin has called “an alternative modernity.”¹⁶ Griffin has isolated a core content of fascist doctrine that can be found in Mussolinian Fascism, German Nazism, and in the programmes of other contemporary movements—though not in the programme of any lasting political regime anywhere else (and not even in Franco’s regime in Spain, more a variety of conservative traditionalism than of fascism). This core doctrine of fascism as understood by Griffin and quite a number of other scholars in the Anglophone world today comprises a revolutionary ultra-nationalism based on an assumption of a prevalent state of decadence that calls for national rebirth.¹⁷ Those scholars who do not agree in all respects with this definition or who do not believe that Italian Fascism and German Nazism can be bracketed

It was Gorbachev himself who acknowledged publicly the role of John Paul II in the fall of Communism. “What has happened in Eastern Europe in recent years would not have been possible without the presence of this Pope, without the great role even political that he has played on the world scene” (quoted in *La Stampa*, March 3, 1992).

¹³ Cyprian Blamires, ed., *World Fascism: A Historical Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara: ABC Clio, 2006).

¹⁴ Garrard, “Isaiah Berlin’s Joseph de Maistre,” 123.

¹⁵ See Roger Griffin, Introduction to Blamires, *World Fascism*, 7.

¹⁶ See Roger Griffin, *Modernism and Fascism: The Sense of a New Beginning under Mussolini and Hitler* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2007).

¹⁷ Roger Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism* (London: Pinter, 1991); for a summary account, see Griffin’s Introduction to Blamires, *World Fascism*, 1–6.

together at all, while accepting that there was a strong revolutionary element in Mussolinian and Hitlerian rhetoric, sometimes point to the fact that at Nazism's core was a particular and specific type of racialism that set it apart from Mussolinian Fascism.¹⁸ Whichever view we adopt it hardly matters here, for no variant of fascism bears much resemblance to Maistre's ideas. He was a papalist and a universalist—what fascists would have labelled a 'cosmopolitan'¹⁹—who called for the opposite of a revolution rather than a revolution. Not a revolutionary, nor a racist, nor an ultra-nationalist—for all he was enamoured (as a non-Frenchman) of France and her culture and her role in the world. The idea of decadence may, it is true, be found in his writing, but rebirth is actually a concept associated with the Revolution itself—propagandists on all sides regarded the purpose of the calling of the Estates General in 1789 to be to accomplish the 'regeneration' of France.²⁰ Interestingly though, the idea of 'rebirth' was prominent under the more sophisticated name of 'palingenesis' in the thinking of Maistre's younger counterrevolutionary contemporary Pierre-Simon Ballanche.²¹ However, there does not seem to be any obvious *filiation* from here to fascism.

'Decadence' thinking was widespread in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century in Europe. Léon Daudet, disciple of Charles Maurras, called his era "the stupid century."²² Fritz Stern wrote about

¹⁸ For an interesting debate between Griffin and other scholars of fascism on his conception of it, see *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right*, ed. Roger Griffin, Werner Loh and Andreas Umland (Stuttgart: Ibidem, 2006); for a survey of approaches to fascism see e.g., A. James Gregor, *Interpretations of Fascism* (New Brunswick/London: Transaction, 1997). Gregor is not however in agreement with Griffin as to the nature of fascism.

¹⁹ See Blamires, *World Fascism*, entry on "Cosmopolitanism."

²⁰ See e.g., Jeremy Bentham, *Rights, Representation, and Reform: Nonsense upon Stilts and Other Writings on the French Revolution*, ed. Philip Schofield, Catherine Pease-Watkin and Cyprian Blamires (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8 and note 1.

²¹ Pierre-Simon Ballanche (1776–1847), author of *Essais de palingénésie sociale* (1827–30); see C. Huit, *La vie et les oeuvres de Ballanche* (New York: Arno, 1979 [Lyon: Vitte, 1904]); Huit traces Ballanche's use of 'palingenesis' back to the eighteenth-century Genevan Protestant writer Charles Bonnet. On Ballanche and Maistre, see Blamires, "Three Critiques of the French Revolution," 188–190; see also Griffin, *The Nature of Fascism*, 32–3.

²² Koenraad W. Swart, *The Sense of Decadence in Nineteenth-Century France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1964), 150; cf. also Robert Bessède, *La crise de la conscience catholique dans la littérature et la pensée françaises à la fin du xix^e siècle* (Paris: Klincksieck, 1975), 25ff.

the phenomenon in his book *The Politics of Cultural Despair*, seeing in a mood of “cultural despair” in late nineteenth-century Germany the seeds of the Nazi movement. Speaking of three leading representatives of pessimism from this period, Lagarde, Langbehn, and Moeller van den Bruck (populariser of the term “The Third Reich”), Stern writes “Unable to endure the ills which they diagnosed and which they had experienced in their own lives, they sought to become prophets who would point the way to a national rebirth.”²³ It was to be this ‘national rebirth’ that the Nazis promoted after World War I.

Two pieces by Berlin devoted specifically to Joseph de Maistre have appeared in print, a shorter one and a longer one. The shorter one is the text of a radio address that Berlin gave on Maistre in the early Fifties.²⁴ The longer one represents a text that Berlin composed at some point after this without bringing it to a point where he felt it was ready for publication. He apparently laid it aside in 1960, and it was eventually retrieved by his editor Henry Hardy and published in 1990.²⁵ As far as I am concerned, there is nothing of major importance in the shorter text that is not in the longer one, and for that reason I shall concentrate today on the longer one, which is entitled “Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism.” There is of course also a further treatment of Maistre in the context of a study of Tolstoy in what is one of Berlin’s most famous and oft-quoted pieces of writing, *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, but I don’t think this adds anything materially.²⁶

I have counted at least a dozen separate heads of accusation in Berlin’s denunciation of the *fascisant* potential in Maistre’s thinking. But as Garrard pointed out, one of the features of Maistre’s thought that most troubled Berlin is the Savoyard’s alleged preoccupation with blood and death. He claims that Maistre revelled in bloodshed and glorified war. In an oft-quoted passage Maistre gives a graphic description in *Les soirées* of the earth as drenched in blood, like a cosmic altar of

²³ Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of the Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley etc: University of California Press, 1974 [1961]); see also for France the magisterial study by Antoine Compagnon, *Les antimodernes: de Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

²⁴ Isaiah Berlin, “Maistre,” in Berlin, *Freedom and its Betrayal: Six Enemies of Human Liberty*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: Chatto & Windus, 2002).

²⁵ Berlin, “Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism,” in Berlin, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*; see x.

²⁶ Berlin, “The Hedgehog and the Fox,” in Berlin, *Russian Thinkers*, ed. Henry Hardy, Aileen Kelly (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982, [London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1953]), esp. 57–81.

sacrifice.²⁷ I personally find this passage exemplary in its lucidity and clarity. Maistre lived through not just the French Revolution but the Napoleonic Wars, among the most bloody in history.²⁸ Napoleon is often credited with having given a massive fillip to—or perhaps even having invented—the concept of total war, though this had already been prefigured by the armies of the Revolution. Maistre was in St. Petersburg at the time of the invasion of Russia by Napoleon's armies; the mass butchering of those armies combined with the ravages of winter cold etc. gave it a dramatic edge of intensity almost unparalleled until Stalingrad.²⁹ Reflecting on the novel degree of savagery that marked Maistre's era, I cannot fault him for his description of the earth as a scene of universal bloodshed. Even before the Napoleonic bloodbath, the dreaded guillotine had become the nightmarish emblem of the Revolution. This first chilling mechanisation of murder is surely more premonitory of Auschwitz and the gas chambers than anything Maistre might have said? Such was certainly the opinion of a specialist on the history of totalitarianism in the early postwar period, J. L. Talmon. After devoting fifty pages to the eighteenth-century (with Rousseau, Morelly, and Mably prominent), he devoted the whole of the rest of his text to the Revolution and its aftermath.³⁰ Joseph de Maistre receives one mention.³¹

²⁷ Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre Œuvres*, ed. Pierre Glauides (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 661; see also a recent interesting discussion of Maistre and sacrifice in the Cambridge Ph.D. thesis by Carolina Armenteros, "Joseph de Maistre and the Idea of History, 1794–1820" (2004), Chapter 4.

²⁸ As is noted by Jean-Yves Pranchère in "La philosophie de Joseph de Maistre," *Revue des études maistriennes*, 13 (1997): 51.

²⁹ It must have been in Hitler's mind over a century later that he would be the new Napoleon, achieving what his illustrious predecessor had failed to do, and subjugating the Slavic hordes. Why does Berlin pick on Maistre as Nazism's predecessor and not on Napoleon?

³⁰ J.L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (London: Mercury, 1961 [Secker & Warburg, 1952]).

³¹ One thing I find odd about Berlin's writing is his reluctance to write about the impact of the Revolution on European thinking, despite the fact that he once told me that the French Revolution was the great question for the Nineteenth Century, just as the Russian Revolution was for the Twentieth. In his reflection he seems always to have focussed on the process of *filiation* linking different writers without attending very much to external events and circumstances. One exception is his introduction to H.G. Schenk's book *The Mind of the European Romantics*—where he devotes his text to offering an alternative thesis about the development of Romanticism to that of Schenk, who argues that Romanticism was a response to the void created by the loss of religious certainty in the aftermath of the Revolution (cf H.G. Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics* (London: Constable, 1966).

My reading of Maistre then is that he takes a deep draught of reality. T. S. Eliot said that humankind cannot bear very much reality,³² but I think Maistre was an exception to that rule. He looked at the world around him with unflinching lucidity and clarity of vision. He and Voltaire had something in common here. In *Candide* you find a tale in which the world appears as a tissue of absurdities—in some ways Voltaire was a prophet of Camus.³³ Evil and betrayal and bloodshed are rife, but Voltaire's brush—unlike Maistre's—displays the light and scornful touch of the sceptic. What are we to do in the face of such a mad world?—is the question asked at the end, and the only answer Voltaire offers is the celebrated enigma: "Il faut cultiver notre jardin."³⁴ In *Les soirées* Maistre is tackling the same issue as Voltaire, only he is not—as Voltaire is—a mocking sceptic but a committed believer. Maistre has an apologetic agenda, he is trying to retrieve a Catholic interpretation of things from the vilification of the Enlightenment. But he is aiming to do this in a language that will make sense to his contemporaries. Instead of appealing to revealed truth, he follows the path of natural theology, but he does not follow the traditional way in natural theology of looking to demonstrate the presence of God in the beauties and complexities of the natural world. Instead, he looks for that presence in human societies and history. Hence he seeks everywhere for social and historical phenomena that reflect or even embody spiritual truths, an exercise that sometimes leads him into murky waters. For example, he famously attempts to justify Catholic teaching about the infallibility of the pope by comparing it to the inappellability that is essential to the way that civil society functions: at the end of every judicial process there has to be a final decision that brings an end to that process; Maistre suggests that this finality of a sovereign's decision is analogous with the role of the Popes as final judges in matters of dogma.³⁵ He claims that such dogmas are simply *lois du monde divinisées*. This procedure can be helpful to those grappling to understand

³² T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*: "Burnt Norton," in *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber & Faber, 1969), 172.

³³ See e.g., Albert Camus, *The Plague*, ed. Tony Judt, Robin Buss (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 2002).

³⁴ Voltaire, *Candide, ou L'optimisme*, in Voltaire, *Romans et contes*, ed. H. Bénac (Paris: Garnier, 1960), 221.

³⁵ Maistre, *Du pape*, ed. Jacques Lovie, Joannès Chetail (Geneva: Droz, 1966), Chapter 1; see Blamires, "Three Critiques of the French Revolution," 159ff.; H. König, "Das Papstwerk Joseph de Maistres," *Theologisches Quartalschrift*, 127 (1936): 92ff.

such dogmas as papal infallibility, but it is open to serious criticism, as Rémusat pointed out many years ago.³⁶

As to Maistre's supposedly excessive preoccupation with blood and gore, we have to remember that his chosen topic in *Les soirées* is theodicy.³⁷ It is about justifying the ways of Divine Providence to man, it is about the problem of evil in the world. In order to deal satisfactorily with the problem of evil in the world, the Savoyard must give full recognition to the extent and the power and the rootedness of that evil. No use sentimentalising it or underplaying it. On more than one occasion Berlin comments on the "hard lines" of Maistre's thinking, on his opposition to any sentimentality or gush, something that seems to set him apart from his contemporaries in the Romantic movement.³⁸ But in the age of the guillotine and of total war, Maistre's frank, unabashed, and wholehearted acceptance of the horrendous reality of evil in the world is the essential foundation for his theodicy. Just as, at the start of the third millennium, any attempt at theodicy would be useless if it did not take account of Auschwitz and Hiroshima and the mass slaughter of millions under communist regimes.

So much for Maistre's treatment of violence. Did he actually go so far as to glorify war? According to my reading of Maistre, he did not. What he did do was to comment on the mysterious glorification of the soldier that is *already* so widely prevalent in human societies. This is the whole point of his celebrated comparison of the status of the executioner with the status of the soldier, one of the best-known passages in all of his writings.³⁹ Maistre wants to ask the question: why do actual people out there choose to glorify soldiers and soldiering in the way that they commonly do? There is a mystery here, when we consider that the executioner, who is just like the soldier in being empowered to kill on behalf of the state, is a figure widely shunned. Here as so often, Maistre's analysis is perceptive. He is observing something that is indubitably true, that society treats two men performing the same task—killing—so differently. Maistre's aim is to point to the illogicality and absurdity—or, as he prefers to call it, the mystery—embedded in the ordinary life

³⁶ Charles de Rémusat, "Du traditionalisme," *Revue des deux mondes*, 27th year, 2nd period (15 May 1857), 256–60.

³⁷ For a recent study of Maistre's theodicy see the Cambridge thesis by Carolina Armenteros on Maistre, Chapter 5.

³⁸ E.g., "Joseph de Maistre and the Origins of Fascism" [Henceforth *JMOF*], 102, 158.

³⁹ *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, 7ème entretien.

of society and the everyday unconscious life of men. The eighteenth century looked at established religions and said: "they are not rational," therefore we either put them into a rational form or else we must relegate them to a kind of Department of Irrationality set aside for irrational people who like that sort of thing.⁴⁰ Maistre looks at ordinary typical human attitudes and behaviours, at social conventions as well as at the outworkings of history, and says "human life is itself not rational, it is full of mystery, and that mystery points to God."

Maistre's analysis of war is intended to make sense of war in an economy of Divine Providence. It is for this reason that he looks at the paradoxical ways that good things do actually come out of war in the teeth of rational expectations and in spite of all appearances. Maistre's quest is to find how to see the way that some good consequences may flow from intrinsically bad things. To try and nail him down to glorifying the bad things is to misunderstand the knife-edge on which Providentialism sits so awkwardly. And it is directly connected to Maistre's taste for paradox, something with which we are familiar from more recent times in writers such as Oscar Wilde and G.K. Chesterton.⁴¹

There has been some disagreement in recent scholarship about Maistre's attitude to war. Owen Bradley shares the view I am putting forward here, that Maistre's sometimes quite lyrical writing about bloodshed and violence is purely descriptive.⁴² Graeme Garrard feels that this analysis is too sweeping.⁴³ He refers to the passage in *Considerations on France* where Maistre observes that violent destruction can have good effects, that individuals and groups can be "retempered by blood." Then there is the passage where Maistre claims that "war is divine" both "in the mysterious glory that surrounds it" and "in its results, which absolutely escape the speculations of human reason."⁴⁴

⁴⁰ This is of course a very crude summary statement. For further discussion see e.g. Alan P.F. Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997).

⁴¹ See e.g., Hugh Kenner, *Paradox in Chesterton* (London: Sheed & Ward, 1948) (interestingly, with an introduction by Marshall McLuhan); Cyprian Smith, *The Way of Paradox: Spiritual Life as Taught by Meister Eckhart* (London: DLT, 1987); George Melhuish, *The Paradoxical Nature of Reality* (Bristol: St. Vincent's Press, 1973).

⁴² Owen Bradley, *A Modern Maistre: The Social and Political Thought of Joseph de Maistre* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), xvi.

⁴³ Graeme Garrard, "Isaiah Berlin's Joseph de Maistre," in *Isaiah Berlin's Counter-Enlightenment*, 117–31; here, 120ff.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 121.

Garrard considers that these passages justify Berlin in claiming that Maistre thinks war a good thing. However, the “mysterious glory” that according to Maistre surrounds war is simply a fact of life, since warlike achievements, victories, and trophies have always had a mysterious allure in human societies. Humanity does glorify war, there has always been a mystique of war and there still is, even after World War I and the mechanised butchery of the Trenches and Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

When Maistre speaks of war as “divine” because “mysterious” we must bear in mind that he habitually equates the divine and the mysterious. This is the understanding of God and religion that he likes to throw in the teeth of the Enlightenment, for which religion must demonstrate its ‘reasonableness’ to be treated seriously. It has nothing to do with some kind of approving attitude on his part towards war, it is merely a reflection of his general strategy of demonstrating the mystery of life as an apologetic technique. The Enlightenment wanted to bring revelation to the bar of reason (on the assumption that the ordinary world of our everyday experience is easily comprehensible and unproblematic) in order to eliminate the supernatural,⁴⁵ Maistre however wants to prove that in reality the natural is itself shot through with mystery and hence reflects the supernatural—even quite apart from any supposed or true revelation.⁴⁶

The idea that the natural is shot through with mystery has not entirely disappeared today. In the field of politics and economics one of the most influential thinkers of the past forty years has been the Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek, whose fundamental argument is that a centrally-planned economy will always be disastrous because the planners can never have sufficient information to pursue it successfully.⁴⁷ Hayek is not interested in equating mystery with the divine, but his theme of the essential and intrinsic limitedness of human knowledge is not so far from Maistre’s. This theme is also implicit in John Dunn’s intriguingly entitled study of politics today, *The Cunning of Unreason*.⁴⁸ James Le Fanu has written of our being “on the brink of a tectonic shift in our understanding of ourselves” whose result will be “the

⁴⁵ See e.g. John Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious* (London, 1696); John Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity, as delivered in the Scriptures* (1695).

⁴⁶ See Blamires, “Three Critiques of the French Revolution,” 113–16.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, 1944.

⁴⁸ John Dunn, *The Cunning of Unreason. Making sense of Politics* (London: HarperCollins, 2000).

rediscovery of the central premise of Western philosophy that there is 'more than we can know'.⁴⁹ And since the credit crunch and the crisis of capitalism, awareness of the mysteries inherent in the financial arena has drawn attention to the ideas of commentators like Mandelbrot, who wrote about an earlier Stock Market crash of 1998 that "it was, according to the standard models of the financial industry, so improbable a sequence of events as to have been impossible," adding that "the seemingly improbable happens all the time in the financial markets."⁵⁰

To return to Berlin's critique of Maistre's attitude to war and violence, one question stands out as rather puzzling. Berlin himself lived through the most bloody and violent century in human history. In the two world wars and under the brutal heel of Nazism and Stalinism the whole of Europe was bathed in blood. Maistre's portrayal of the earth as a vast killing field proved true as never before. So appalling did many commentators find the slaughter of the trenches and the monstrosity of the Holocaust that they felt these events as calling into question the foundations of Western civilization. Why did Berlin even need to comment on Maistre's 'preoccupation with blood and slaughter', and still less to claim that they somehow constituted a condemnation of the Savoyard? Indeed, Berlin does at one point seem to admit that Maistre's openness to the dark side of humanity and human history has much to teach us:

No one who has lived through the first half of the twentieth century, and, indeed, after that, can doubt that Maistre's political psychology ... has proved, if only by revealing, and stressing, destructive tendencies—what the German romantics called the dark, nocturnal side of things—which humane and optimistic persons tend not to want to see, at times a better guide to human conduct than the faith of believers in reason; or at any rate can provide a sharp, by no means useless, antidote to their often over-simple, superficial and, more than once, disastrous remedies.⁵¹

⁴⁹ James Le Fanu, *Why Us? How Science Rediscovered the Mystery of Ourselves* (London: HarperCollins, 2009).

⁵⁰ Benoit B. Mandelbrot and Richard L Hudson, *The (Mis)Behaviour of Markets: A Fractal View of Risk, Ruin and Reward*, London: Profile Books, 2005. Other recent titles of interest in this area include *What we can never know: Blindspots in Philosophy and Science* by David Gamez (London: Continuum, 2007); Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan* (London: Allen Lane, 2007). An earlier book by Taleb on a similar theme, *Foiled by Randomness* (Texere Publishing, 2001), has been translated into eighteen languages.

⁵¹ *JMOF*, 167–8.

Berlin was attracted to Maistre as well as repulsed, perhaps because he did ultimately perceive that the gloomy evidence of his own time chimed with the Savoyard's perceptions of reality. He also agreed with some at least of Maistre's strictures on the Enlightenment.⁵² The recently-published edition of Berlin's correspondence from the years 1946 to 1960 contain a couple of remarks about Maistre which seem rather more positive than the published essays. In 1959, while claiming that Maistre was 'an anticipator of much of the anti-rationalism that is most horrifying in the present', he went on to observe that he 'said a great deal that is romantically violent, disagreeable, but extremely true, and which liberals lose by averting their faces from it'.⁵³ Not long afterwards he remarked that 'Maistre's terrifying analysis of irrational and unconscious elements in men and their part in the life of individuals and societies seems more realistic and relevant to the central issues of our time than the generally accepted doctrines which form the main stream of European thought'.⁵⁴

What of fascism in all this? Did it in fact glorify bloodshed and war? Nazism and Italian Fascism certainly glorified the warrior ethos and contrasted the admirable soldierly virtues with the materialism espoused by Bolsheviks and Capitalists.⁵⁵ But the two main sources for this were Darwinism, for which the struggle for survival was fundamental, and the bloody trench warfare of the First World War, in which both Mussolini and Hitler and many of their followers were actively involved.⁵⁶ The fascists and the Nazis however simply took for granted that war was glorious, which was the very thing which always caused Maistre so much puzzlement. While Maistre was absorbed in the enigma of the mystery of war, they happily embraced the cult of the warrior in opposition both to the Bolshevik cult of the worker and the Christian cult of the saint.

Apart from his alleged preoccupation with blood and violence, what other features of Maistre's creed did Berlin think were anticipatory of

⁵² See Graeme Garrard, "Strange Reversals: Berlin on the Enlightenment and on the Counter-Enlightenment," in *The One and the Many: Reading Isaiah Berlin*, ed. George Crowder and Henry Hardy (New York: Prometheus, 2007), 141–57.

⁵³ Letter of 14 Aug 1959 to Patrick Swift in Berlin, *Enlightening. Letters 1946–1960*, ed. Henry Hardy and Jennifer Holmes (London: Chatto & Windus, 2009), 701.

⁵⁴ Letter of 8 March 1960 to Elizabeth Jennings in Berlin, *Enlightening*, 728.

⁵⁵ See e.g., Blamires, *World Fascism*, entries on "Warrior Ethos," "Materialism," "Pacifism."

⁵⁶ See e.g., Blamires, *World Fascism*, entries on "Social Darwinism," "War," "World War I."

fascism? Noticing that fascist ideologues tended to thrive on lists of chosen enemies, Berlin claims that Maistre was the first to assemble a list of 'enemies' typical in his view of the great counter-revolutionary movements that culminated in Fascism.⁵⁷ Under the general label of *la secte*, Maistre branded a whole catalogue of 'types' as subverters of order. In this connection Berlin writes as follows:

To the Protestants and Jansenists he [Maistre] now adds deists and atheists, freemasons and Jews, scientists and democrats, Jacobins, liberals, utilitarians, anti-clericals, egalitarians, perfectibilians, materialists, idealists, lawyers, journalists, secular reformers, and intellectuals of every breed; all those who appeal to abstract principles, who put faith in individual reason or the individual conscience; believers in individual liberty or the rational organisation of society, reformers and revolutionaries....⁵⁸

One or two observations on the catalogue of enemies that Berlin imputes to Maistre are in order. The inclusion of freemasons and Jews in the list is surprising. The people who identified Masonic influence in the Revolution were above all Barruel⁵⁹ and Robison.⁶⁰ Berlin was perfectly aware that Maistre did not belong in this camp at all. It is true that Italian Fascists and German Nazis blamed the freemasons as a subversive group dangerous to society,⁶¹ but this has nothing at all to do with Maistre, who had himself been a freemason before the Revolution, taking a great interest in certain Masonic thinkers. Then there are the Jews. Generally speaking the Jews were not on Maistre's horizon, for he barely mentions them—as Garrard has pointed out—Garrard also notes that any hostility towards the Jews expressed by Maistre is as nothing compared to the ferocious flow of antisemitism that came from the pen of his archenemy Voltaire.⁶² In this connection one historian of Anti-Semitism has argued that

An analysis of everything Voltaire wrote about Jews throughout his life establishes the proposition that he is the major link in Western intellectual history between the anti-Semitism of classic paganism and the

⁵⁷ Berlin, *JMOF*, 119.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Augustin Barruel, *Memoirs Illustrating the History of Jacobinism* (1797).

⁶⁰ John Robison, *Proofs of a Conspiracy against all the Religions and Governments of Europe, Carried on in the Secret Meetings of Freemasons, Illuminati, and Reading Societies etc. Collected from Good Authorities* (Edinburgh, 1797).

⁶¹ See e.g., Cyprian Blamires, *World Fascism*, entry on "Freemasonry/Freemasons."

⁶² Garrard, "Isaiah Berlin's Joseph de Maistre," 124.

modern age. In his favourite pose of Cicero reborn he ruled the Jews to be outside society and to be hopelessly alien even to the future age of enlightened men.⁶³

The misleading inclusion of Jews as members of the class of 'subverters' whom Maistre branded as *la secte* does no honour to Berlin and weakens rather than strengthens his argument. It is surprising that Berlin is far more ferocious about Maistre than he is about Voltaire in this connection, especially in that Berlin was far from uncritical of Voltaire.⁶⁴

Berlin's list of those branded as 'subverters' by Maistre includes intellectuals and especially scientists.⁶⁵ But hostility to the dry abstractions of intellectuals and scientists is a commonplace of the Romantic movement, which exalted the artistic and poetic genius over the rationalistic intellectualism of the Enlightenment.⁶⁶ Some might even want to portray this as the defining essence of Romanticism. The very term 'Romantic' seems to suggest the opposite of intellectualism or the laboratory.

Who actually are the classic members of *la secte* in Maistre's thought? The answer is straightforward: the leading villains in his rogues' gallery are the Protestants, the philosophes, the Gallicans, and the Jansenists.⁶⁷ At the time I wrote my own thesis in the early 1980s nobody took Maistre's suggestion that there were powerful connections between these categories and the Revolution very seriously, apart from the case of the philosophes; and here the issue of the relationship between their publications and activities and what happened in 1789 and afterwards has been debated endlessly.⁶⁸ But over the past twenty years historians

⁶³ Arthur Hertzberg, *The French Enlightenment and the Jews* (New York/London: Columbia University Press, 1968), 10 and *passim*. That Voltaire's fanatical hostility to the Jews was known to the Nazis can be instanced from the fact that Houston Stewart Chamberlain, author of one of their favourite texts, *The Foundations of the Nineteenth Century*, 2 vols., (London: John Lane, 1911), devotes a chapter to Voltaire as one of his mentors in his *Lebenswege meines Denkens*, 3rd ed., (Munich: Bruckmann, 1942 [1919]).

⁶⁴ I recall Berlin telling me that he had been bitterly attacked at a conference for expressing reservations about Voltaire.

⁶⁵ Berlin, *JMOF*, 119–20.

⁶⁶ See e.g., Schenk, *The Mind of the European Romantics*, Chapter 1, "The Reaction against Rationalism."

⁶⁷ See Blamires, "Three Critiques of the French Revolution," 76–90.

⁶⁸ See e.g., William Doyle, *The Origins of the French Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980); Daniel Mornet, *Les origines intellectuelles de la révolution française 1715–1787* (Paris: Payot, 1929); for an earlier treatment see J. J. Mounier, *De l'influence attribuée aux philosophes, aux francs-maçons et aux illuminés sur la révolution de France* (Tübingen: Cotta, Gutenberg Reprint, 1980 [1801]).

have as a matter of fact begun to make intriguing connections between the Jansenists and the Gallicans and the French Revolution. I think particularly of the extraordinary pioneering work of Dale Van Kley and others who have followed this particular trail.⁶⁹ Van Kley demonstrated for the first time the way that Jansenism transformed in the course of the eighteenth century from a primarily religious movement into a powerful political force. I myself have changed my own opinions about the role of Protestants in the French Revolution as a result of more than fifteen years of research in Geneva and the UK for a book I have recently published entitled *The French Revolution and the Creation of Benthamism*.⁷⁰ This research drew my attention to the remarkable work of a scholar named Jean Bénétruy on the circle of advisers around Mirabeau.⁷¹ In the crucial years of 1789 and 1790 Mirabeau—one of the key figures of the early Revolution—depended hugely on a group of Genevan Protestants who clearly had their own agenda; they had a twofold aim of encouraging the establishment of an Anglo-Genevan system of government in France and of profiting from that to obtain the complete independence of Geneva from all French interference,⁷² something which had previously been endemic for many decades. When you add to this the presence of the Genevan banker Necker in the French government at the crucial time, and the subsequent role of the Genevan Etienne Clavière (who had earlier been a member of Mirabeau's inner circle of advisers) as Minister of Finance, and consider the obvious benefits for Protestants in the overthrow of the

⁶⁹ Dale Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560-1791* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996); Catherine Maire, *De la cause de Dieu à la cause de la nation. Le jansénisme au XVIII^e siècle* (Paris: Gallimard, 1998); *Jansénisme et Révolution*, ed. Catherine Maire (Paris: Bibliothèque Mazarine, 1990); William Doyle, *Jansenism: Catholic Resistance to Authority from the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan/New York: St Martin's, 2000); *Du jansénisme à la laïcité. Le jansénisme et les origines de la déchristianisation*, ed. Léo Hamon (Paris: Editions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme, 1987).

⁷⁰ Cyprian Blamires, *The French Revolution and the Creation of Benthamism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2008).

⁷¹ Jean Bénétruy, *L'atelier de Mirabeau. Quatre proscrits genevois dans la tourmente révolutionnaire* (Geneva: Alex Jullien, 1962); Etienne Dumont, *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau et sur les deux premières assemblées législatives*, ed. Jean Bénétruy (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950) (first edition of Dumont's work was published in 1832—English translation *Recollections of Mirabeau and of the First Two Legislative Assemblies of France* (London: Edward Bull, 1832).

⁷² See Blamires, *The French Revolution and the Creation of Benthamism*, 173–6; Richard Whatmore, "Etienne Dumont, the British Constitution, and the French Revolution," in *Historical Journal*, 50, 1 (2007): 23–47.

monarchy and the assault on the influence of the Catholic Church, it has to be admitted that Maistre's claims are much less far-fetched than they might once have appeared.⁷³

Whereas Maistre repeatedly refers to the *conjuraton* of the philosophes, the Protestants, the Jansenists, and the Gallicans, he does not—as we have seen—include the Jews among the conspirators. Curiously the author of the classic multi-volume work on the history of European anti-semitism, Leon Poliakov, an almost exact contemporary of Berlin's and with similar Russian origins, while acknowledging fully the rage of Voltaire against the Jews, is also inclined to pay more than merited attention to Joseph de Maistre. But Poliakov's reliability as a historian in this particular area is somewhat undermined by the fact that he puts the Savoyard together with Barruel and Robison as promoters of the idea that the revolution could be attributed to the triad 'illumunism-freemasonry-philosophy', whereas in reality Maistre's list of villains included only one of these—philosophy.⁷⁴ Elsewhere Poliakov reprints what is almost the sole reference in all of Maistre's writings to the "accursed sect" of the Jews and the dangers they pose to Christian Europe—to be found in one of one of the Savoyard's more obscure works.⁷⁵ This shows only that Maistre shared the long-standing suspicion of the Jews endemic amongst Catholics, it is in no way enough to suggest that he merits special inclusion in a survey like Poliakov's. Poliakov's impressively wide-ranging account of the history of anti-semitism devotes a rather surprising amount of attention to French material, perhaps because France became his adoptive home. It seems likely that he would have known Berlin, but there is no mention of him either in Ignatieff's biography of Berlin or in the two volumes of Berlin's correspondence that have so far been edited.⁷⁶

⁷³ Nor was he the only person to make such claims at the time: for example, the one-time Resident of France in Geneva J. L. Soulavie developed a similar thesis at great length in his *Historical and Political Memoirs of the Reign of Lewis XVI from his Marriage to his Death*, 6 vols. (London: G. & J. Robinson, 1802 [French original 1801]). Soulavie tends to be dismissed as an extreme conspiracy theorist—and he does indeed deserve to be taken with a liberal pinch of salt—but there are some interesting and thought-provoking observations in his text; see further Blamires, *The French Revolution and the Creation of Benthamism*, 135–7, 145–6.

⁷⁴ Leon Poliakov, *The History of Anti-Semitism: Volume 3: From Voltaire to Wagner* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), 276.

⁷⁵ The work in question is "Quatre chapitres sur la Russie" and the citation is taken by Poliakov from Maistre, *Oeuvres complètes*, 14 vols. (Lyon: Vitte, 1884), 3: 336.

⁷⁶ Volume 1: *Flourishing. Letters 1928–1946* (2004), volume 2, *Enlightening. Letters 1946–1960* (2009); both volumes edited by Henry Hardy and published by Chatto & Windus in London.

As well as claiming that the notion of a list of enemies and conspirators is somehow an anticipation of fascism, Berlin also suggests that Maistre's notion of the threat of 'dark forces' to society is somehow a foretaste of totalitarianism.⁷⁷ We all know of course that governments like to exploit their citizens' fear of anarchy or terrorism to keep a tight rein on them, but Maistre is surely not without justification in arguing nonetheless that such 'dark forces' may actually be at work in any given society. The planes that crashed into the Twin Towers and demolished them in 2001 were real and they were the product of real plots. We may aspire to a totally transparent society, but only a fool could believe that we actually have one, as the list of lamentable political scandals continues to demonstrate.

Another point of association between Maistre and fascism is said by Berlin to be Maistre's alleged glorification of chains as alone capable of curing man's destructive instincts.⁷⁸ But it seems to me that here Maistre is appealing back over the heads of the revolutionaries and over the heads of the philosophes to an earlier way of running societies which involved the frank use of force to a much greater extent. The Enlightenment had produced figures like Beccaria and his admirer Jeremy Bentham and other philanthopists who called for the abolition of the death penalty, it had given birth to the first generation of heroic prison and social reformers. It is true that Maistre does call for a return to earlier more punitive values, but to brand this as 'proto-fascist' is to make the whole of ancien regime civilisation proto-fascist, whereas in fact fascism was very much a product of modernity.

One of Maistre's purposes is to oppose the tendency of the Enlightenment to abandon an anthropology based on the notion of original sin. The Enlightenment spawned a whole world of ideologies that bypassed original sin to assert that society could be improved not by penitence and divine grace but by the application of the proper methods, systems, or techniques. These were the great ideologies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Saint-Simonianism, Fourierism, Owenism, Benthamism, positivism, socialism, cooperativism, anarchism, Marxism, and so forth. Most modern forms of conservatism have opposed all such ideologies robustly and generally speaking without too much reference to Joseph de Maistre, for he is strong meat

⁷⁷ *JMOF*, 127.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

and not to the taste of the many. The point of reference for them is much more likely to be the much safer and less threatening Edmund Burke. Ironically however, more recently a violent critique of many of the philanthropic reformist tendencies of that era has come from the Left-leaning French historian Michel Foucault and his huge band of followers, for whom the reforming zeal of the likes of John Howard, Jeremy Bentham, and the prison reform movements merely masks a shift in power relations away from direct use of violent means applied to bodies towards more subtle forms of social control.⁷⁹ Curiously, this means that the openly brutal tactics employed with accused or convicted persons under the old regime might be read as less sinister than the mind-control strategies encouraged by those long considered to be progressive humanitarian reformers.

Fascist ideologues generally disliked the French Revolution.⁸⁰ They saw the revolutionary slogan of 'equality and fraternity' as reflecting the traditional values of the Christian gospel and cursed revolution and church in the same breath. They saw themselves as enemies not just of pie-in-the-sky egalitarianism but also of a cult of mediocrity which they thought resulted from that. However, to the extent that Maistre himself was an elitist, he upheld the traditional aristocratic caste, for whom fascists had no respect at all. Their elite was the warrior elite, the nationalist elite for whom courage and honour were what counted, not membership of an aristocratic birth caste.⁸¹

We should remember that the French Revolution succeeded in dividing Europe into 'for' and 'against' right down to 1945, and not exclusively or even typically into those for and those against Legitimism. Although Legitimism combined with distaste for Jacobinical persecutions and horror of the guillotine to provide the backbone for a first wave of hostility to the Revolution, in time a completely new type of this hostility appeared in the mid-nineteenth century, and its prophet was Gobineau.⁸² Gobineau came from classic Legitimist stock

⁷⁹ See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Peregrine, 1987 [1977]); Blamires, *The French Revolution and the Creation of Benthamism*, Chapter 1.

⁸⁰ See e.g., Blamires, *World Fascism*, entry on "The French Revolution."

⁸¹ See e.g., K. Walther Darré, *Neuadel aus Blut und Boden* (Munich: Lehmann, 1930), which theorises the replacement of the old aristocracy of birth with a new one of 'blood and soil'.

⁸² Joseph Arthur comte de Gobineau (1816–1882), author of the best-selling *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 4 vols. (1853–5). For a study which retains

and he never reconciled himself with the Revolution, he developed a new kind of 'rejectionism' which focussed on hatred for egalitarianism, seen as producing mediocrity and decline. But Gobineau could see that the egalitarianism of 1789 in some way reflected the Christian teaching about men being equals in the sight of God, and for that reason he turned against the Christian faith as well.⁸³ Thus what Berlin liked to call the 'Rejectionist Front' developed in a direction not simply different from Maistrean-style Legitimism but frankly contrary to it. This was the newer style of rejection of the French Revolution that fed into Nazism, for towards the end of the nineteenth century a cult of Gobineau developed in Germany.⁸⁴ It usually combined with hatred for the rule of the monied classes which many felt had been the actual outcome of the Revolution, an outcome merely masked by all the decorative Republican rhetoric about the liberation of the nation.

Then Maistre is accused by Berlin of an appeal to 'blind faith' which is said to echo fascism.⁸⁵ I think Maistre would have reacted quite violently against this notion of 'blind faith'. What he defends is not something called blind faith *vis-à-vis* reason, but 'general reason' or 'universal reason' against private judgement. Maistre's argument here is no different from that of Edmund Burke or other conservative thinkers.⁸⁶ Berlin begs the question because of his own subscription to a particular type of liberal individualism. As he himself is in the camp of those who put their faith in private judgement, he simply cannot treat Maistre's argument seriously.

Berlin then seizes on Maistre's belief that only what is mysterious can survive,⁸⁷ which is indeed a prominent and provocative element in his thinking. But I don't think fascists would have identified with this principle at all. Their self-image did not actually include reverence for mystery; on the contrary, they considered that they were advocating a

its usefulness today see Michael D. Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology: The Social and Political Thought of Count Gobineau* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1970).

⁸³ See e.g., Biddiss, *Father of Racist Ideology*, 169, "Here... Gobineau's hostility to Christian egalitarianism seems overt and clear."

⁸⁴ See e.g., Ludwig Schemann, *Gobineau und die Deutsche Kultur* (Leipzig/Berlin: Teubner, 1934). Karl Ludwig Schemann (1832–1938) was encouraged to take up the study of Gobineau by Richard Wagner and founded the *Gobineauvereinigung* (Gobineau Society) in 1894.

⁸⁵ *JMOF*, 127.

⁸⁶ See Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790).

⁸⁷ *JMOF*, 127.

modern scientific creed.⁸⁸ Berlin next attacks as proto-fascist Maistre's conviction that liberal individualism is an absurdity.⁸⁹ This was undoubtedly one of Maistre's core convictions, and it would certainly have been echoed by Italian Fascists and German Nazis but also by Marxist thinkers and many others on the Left as well, not to mention multitudes of Christians of evangelical, Catholic, or Orthodox persuasion. Another allegedly 'protofascist' element in Maistre singled out by Berlin is represented by Maistre's hatred for the subversive influence of uncontrolled intellectuals.⁹⁰ Is this not tantamount however to the celebrated dictum, "the pen is mightier than the sword?" Maistre feared the power of intellectuals precisely because he quite rightly recognised and feared that power. Indeed it is a weapon that Berlin himself exercised with extraordinary potency. Fascists were certainly inclined to despise abstraction⁹¹—and in this they shared something with Maistre. They thought that their creed gave them some kind of direct vitalistic relationship to reality that abstract philosophy could never attain.⁹² But although fascists despised those intellectuals who opposed them and scorned to enter into serious discussion with them, it is a mistake to imagine that they were against intellectuals *as such*. This is a myth that arises from the general tendency to regard fascists simply as brainless bully-boys in jackboots. In fact in their self-image they were spiritual warriors of the mind and of the intellect fighting the forces of materialistic plutocracy and Bolshevism. Mussolini was first a teacher and then a journalist, Hitler was an artist, Goebbels had a doctorate, and so on.⁹³ In a little-noticed study of attitudes to the working classes among the English intelligentsia in the first half of the twentieth century, John Carey pointed out that some of the attitudes of writers like H.G. Wells and Bernard Shaw and Virginia Woolf were surprisingly close to those

⁸⁸ See Griffin, Introduction to Blamires, *World Fascism*; and Blamires, *World Fascism*, entries on "Science," "Technology."

⁸⁹ *JMOF*, 127.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ See Blamires, *Encyclopedia of World Fascism*, entry "Abstraction;" also Hermann Glockner, *Essence de la philosophie allemande*, trans. Paul Moraux (Brussels: La Roue Solaire, 1944).

⁹² See e.g., Ferdinand Weinhandl, *Philosophie-Werkzeug und Waffe* (Neumünster in Holstein: Karl Wachholz, 1940).

⁹³ See e.g., Konrad Heiden, *The Fuehrer*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Robinson, 1999 [1944]), *passim*. Hitler was prone to indulge in long speeches about art to his collaborators, for he believed that artistic talent was one of the distinctive marks of the Aryan Race (see Heiden, *The Fuehrer*, 287).

of Adolf Hitler.⁹⁴ One section in his book in particular makes interesting reading: it is entitled "Adolf Hitler's intellectual programme." "There are marked similarities," writes Carey, "between the cultural ideals promulgated in the Führer's writings and conversation and those of the intellectuals we have been looking at."⁹⁵

Later in his essay Berlin makes a very curious connection between Maistre and fascism. Reporting Maistre's view that "there can be no sovereignty without infallibility; no infallibility without God: the pope is God's representative on earth, all legitimate authority is derived from him,"⁹⁶ Berlin goes on to claim that this kind of thinking was "a dominant influence on the reactionary, obscurantist and, in the end, Fascist ideas in the years that followed ..." For the life of me I cannot make the connection between this traditional papalism and Fascism. Neither Mussolini nor Hitler lived or preached the Catholic faith, a faith they had openly abandoned, baptised Catholics though they may have been. Hitler could not disguise his contempt for Franco's devout Catholic faith.⁹⁷ Moreover, nothing in Catholicism can justify the attribution of infallibility to anyone other than the pope, and no Catholics would give credence to the idea that belief in papal infallibility could in any way justify acceptance of a political infallibility in any given regime. The whole point about papal infallibility in Catholic doctrine is its uniqueness.

Berlin makes a further attempt to associate the Savoyard with fascism on the grounds of "Maistre's violent hatred of free traffic in ideas."⁹⁸ Maistre was in other words in favour of censorship. But censorship had long been a fact of life in European states and the free traffic in ideas was a novel idea promulgated in the Enlightenment. Surely if Maistre was against it he was no different from the likes of Metternich? This was one way in which he harked back to an earlier time when censorship was taken for granted. Did all those involved in censorship down the centuries prefigure fascism in some way? I cannot see why this aspect of Maistre's thought should make him look like a proto-fascist, he simply reflected a desire to return to a consensus of earlier times.

⁹⁴ John Carey, *Intellectuals and the Masses. Pride and Prejudice among the literary intelligentsia 1880–1939* (London: Faber & Faber, 1992).

⁹⁵ Carey, *Intellectuals and the Masses*, 198.

⁹⁶ *JMOF*, 134.

⁹⁷ See *Hitler's Table Talk 1941–1944*, trans. Norman Cameron, and R.H. Stevens (New York: Enigma Books, 2000), 607–608, 689.

⁹⁸ *JMOF*, 150.

Then there is a claim by Berlin that “Maistre was almost the first western writer openly to advocate the policy of the deliberate retardation of the liberal arts and sciences, the virtual suppression of some of the central cultural values which transformed western thought and conduct from the Renaissance to our day.”⁹⁹ Berlin goes on to suggest that “it was the twentieth century that was destined to see the richest flowering of this sinister doctrine.” To which I would respond firstly by saying that before Maistre there was Rousseau, whose depressive account of the baleful influence of the arts and the sciences could hardly be bested.¹⁰⁰ Second, I think that precisely this puritanical aspect of Rousseau’s thought reared its head in the later stages of the French Revolution.¹⁰¹

Berlin goes on to draw a contrast between Maistre and his contemporaries the Romantics.¹⁰² He argues that Maistre’s world “is much more realistic and more ferocious than that of the romantics,” suggesting that it was not until the end of the nineteenth century with Nietzsche or Drumont or Belloc or the French *intégralistes*—and eventually in “the totalitarian regimes” that we encounter this style of thought. Again, it is very curious that he identifies only the ferocity of the Right, which was surely mirrored by the equally ferocious analyses of the Left from Marx and Engels onwards. By now one is left wondering why Berlin tends to pick out specifically Catholic writers like Belloc and the *intégralistes*—and also, what do they really have in common with Nietzsche—let alone with the fascists? Why the reference here to the noted Catholic apologist Hilaire Belloc? Surely we can find an equal ferocity in the likes of Thomas Carlyle and Paul de Lagarde, whose influence on the Nazis is incontrovertible?

A further passage in Berlin associating Maistre with fascism connects him to Maurras and the Catholic anti-Dreyfusards, themselves

⁹⁹ *JMOF*, 155.

¹⁰⁰ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *A Discourse on the Arts and Sciences*, in *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: The Social Contract and Discourses*, ed. G.D.H. Cole (London/Melbourne: Dent, 1986); for his onslaught on the bad effects of the theatre, see *Letter to d’Alembert and Writings for the Theater*, ed. Allan Bloom, Charles Butterworth and Christopher Kelly (vol 10 of *The Collected Writings of Rousseau*) (Hanover/London: University Press of New England, 2004); Blamires, *The French Revolution and the Creation of Benthamism*, Chapter 3.

¹⁰¹ See e.g., Carol Blum, *Rousseau and the Republic of Virtue: The Language of Politics in the French Revolution* (Ithaca/London: Cornell University Press, 1986).

¹⁰² *JMOF*, 158.

held to be precursors of fascism.¹⁰³ It is actually hard to see Maistre as much of a precursor of Maurras, for Maurras was not himself a Catholic and supported Catholicism purely for political reasons—*la politique d'abord*. To put politics first was precisely the reverse of Maistre's thinking, for he founded politics with resolute and persistent firmness on religion (*la religion d'abord*), something that Berlin seems reluctant to treat seriously. I have checked in indexes to Maurras for references to Maistre and they are not frequent. Remember that Maurras was a French nationalist, and scant support could be found for that in Maistre, the Jesuit-inspired propagandist for a universal papal monarchy—though he did share the traditional Catholic reverence for the special vocation of France as *la fille aînée de l'église*. If anything, it is Bonald whose Gallican religious vision can be more readily accommodated to nationalism, and this is one of the ways that Bonald differed most crucially from his fellow counterrevolutionary. The identification of the anti-Dreyfusards with Maistre is particularly perplexing, since as I have said it is difficult to find much hint of anti-Judaism in Maistre. We know where the likes of Drumont came from, and it was not from the author of the *Considérations* and the *Soirées*. Drumont had a predecessor in his anti-Semitic crusade named Alphonse Toussenel.¹⁰⁴ Toussenel's attack on the Jews constitutes an assault on what he regarded as the retrograde consequences of the Revolution. This is not a plea for a return to the old regime as found in Maistre but a call for a different sort of revolution. The beef is that the Revolution has not benefited the poor but has on the contrary resulted in the replacement of the power of an aristocratic feudal caste with the power of money—which for Toussenel and many other propagandists was what they meant by the reign of the Jews. This has no connection with Maistre at all, for his critique of the Revolution was entirely different. It does however provide a foretaste of French nationalist and German Nazi propaganda.

In truth, for anyone who is to any degree acquainted with the literature of fascism, Berlin's attempt to connect Maistre to it can only be

¹⁰³ *JMOF*, 170.

¹⁰⁴ Alphonse Toussenel (1803–1885), utopian socialist and follower of Charles Fourier, author of *Les Juifs rois de l'époque: Histoire de la féodalité financière*, 1847. Modern edition published by Editions du Trident, 2 vols. (Paris, 1985).

regarded as absurd. Unfortunately however, Berlin's growing posthumous prestige is already leading to the spread of his ideas about the Savoyard. I will content myself with just two examples. In 2003 Josep Llobera published *The Making of Totalitarian Thought*.¹⁰⁵ Extraordinarily, despite its title, this book deals only with trends of thought that the author believes to have led towards fascist totalitarianism, paying no regard whatever to the communist variety. A typical quotation suffices to show how much confidence may be placed in it: "...Maistre's thought is often violent and sinister, with a touch of religion (Catholic fundamentalism). However, when freed from its religious shell it appears close to modern fascist ideology."¹⁰⁶ To speak about Maistre's thought as though it had 'a touch of religion' is simply laughable, and to suppose that it can be freed from its religious shell is nonsensical. Religion is not the shell of Maistre's thought but the kernel. Later on Llobera claims that "It is not that Maistre was a sadist, but he believed that human beings could only be saved if they were subjected to a terrorist authority."¹⁰⁷ As a matter of fact, even Berlin was well aware that Maistre had a particular dislike for "terrorist authority," which he called *la bâtonocratie*, believing it to be counter-productive. Generally speaking however, Llobera simply rehashes Berlin's version of Maistre. Three years after Llobera, Georges Bensoussan's *Europe. Une passion génocidaire*,¹⁰⁸ devotes several pages to Maistre "and his heirs," again with reference to Berlin's version of the Savoyard.¹⁰⁹

Berlin was of course deeply affected by the twentieth century experience of totalitarianism—which had impacted painfully on his own family when they had to flee from Eastern Europe after the Bolshevik Revolution. He found a haven of freedom in the United Kingdom and he saw that there was an underlying philosophy of 'negative' freedom in the English intellectual tradition, which he associated particularly and rightly with J.S. Mill. This he felt offered the only bulwark against tyranny of any sort, and he devoted his life to its defence as preferable to any kind of comprehensive all-embracing doctrine. At the same time

¹⁰⁵ Josep R. Llobera, *The Making of Totalitarian Thought* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2003).

¹⁰⁶ Llobera, *The Making of Totalitarian Thought*, 47.

¹⁰⁷ Llobera, *The Making of Totalitarian Thought*, 55.

¹⁰⁸ Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2006.

¹⁰⁹ Part II, Section 1.

he had a unique ability—and in my limited experience it was indeed unique—to understand the good aspects of other worldviews and to appreciate why exotic extremisms tended to exercise a magic attraction on many, by contrast with the classic mainstream ideas of the one he was wont to call (in private at least) “boring old Mill.” Berlin felt that although both Millian liberalism and “reason” itself—which he saw was hugely difficult to define or come to agreement about—were full of problems, they were nonetheless “all we have.”

PART II: MAISTRE IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

LE MYSTIQUE DE LA TRADITION:
BARBEY WORSHIPS AT THE ALTAR OF JOSEPH DE MAISTRE

Kevin Michael Erwin

The ongoing debate concerning Joseph de Maistre's legacy attests to Maistrian scholars' continued interest in situating his legitimate and proper place in intellectual history. Over the course of the last century and a half, the powerful intellectual bond between Joseph de Maistre (1753–1821) and Jules Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly (1808–1889) has certainly not gone unnoticed and continues to be negotiated and elucidated. In many ways, these two great figures appear to be marching hand-in-hand through posterity, their fates intertwined and passing through constant states of rehabilitation, comparison, and reformulation. Moreover, the interplay between four intellectual quadrants spanning over two hundred years—Bossuet and Maistre, and Barbey and Bloy—remains a constant and important work of reevaluation and reconfiguration. Whether looking forward toward Barbey d'Aurevilly or back toward Joseph de Maistre in today's scholarship, it seems hardly possible *not* to include some sort of mention, citation, or analysis that treats the extensive parallels between the two authors.¹

In his General Introduction to the series *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique*, Pierre Glaudes summarizes the apprenticeship that Barbey constructs for himself, pointing out how the Maistrian model—"at once ethical, epistemological and aesthetic"²—provides Barbey with

¹ Pierre Glaudes, in numerous editions and essays on Joseph de Maistre and Jules Barbey d'Aurevilly, has explored in detail many facets of their connection. See, for example, his introductions to *Joseph de Maistre: Œuvres* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), *Joseph de Maistre et les figures de l'histoire: Cahiers romantiques*, 2, (Clermont-Ferrand: Librairie Nizet, 1997), and the ongoing re-edition of Barbey's criticism, *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique*, eds. Pierre Glaudes and Catherine Mayaux, of which three volumes are cited in this paper: *I* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2004), *II* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2006) and *III* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 2007).

² Translations mine unless otherwise noted. Pierre Glaudes, General Introduction to *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique I*, x. In the dictionary entry for Barbey d'Aurevilly in his edition of Joseph de Maistre's works, Glaudes echoes this formulation, with some slight modifications: "Barbey, who converted in 1846, finds in his illustrious elder the model of the thinker he wants to be. The compatibility between the two men is at once ethical, metaphysical, and aesthetic." "Barbey d'Aurevilly" in Jean-Louis Darcel, Pierre Glaudes and Jean-Yves Pranchère, "Dictionnaire Joseph de Maistre," *Joseph de Maistre: Œuvres*, 1133.

a figure of Catholic moral righteousness that he seeks to emulate and perfect throughout his career. While these three pillars of ethics, epistemology (or metaphysics), and aesthetics certainly describe the elemental structure of Maistre's influence on Barbey, I will argue that a heightened historical sensibility profoundly linked to Providentialism is equally as significant in tracing their intellectual lineage. A shared historical perspective—Tradition—between Barbey and Maistre is what channels and contours the emanations of Maistrian ideas within Barbey's criticism and polemical writings.

Barbey, like many of his contemporaries, recognized the singular historicity of the nineteenth century: it is an age, he points out, "profoundly historic and will probably only be that."³ This statement is more or less where the similarities between Barbey and his contemporaries end. As a result of such a heightened historical consciousness—what the historian Stephen Bann calls "historical-mindedness" in nineteenth-century Britain and France⁴—a quagmire of historically determined notions develops, with the writing and interpretation of history becoming ever more problematic. Inspired by Joseph de Maistre, Barbey takes up the mantle of Grand Interpreter and Critic, passing judgment on the past—particularly the French Revolution—and expanding his reach toward historians and their works. Barbey identifies the ideal form of historical discourse and methodology using the imagery of mirrors and reflection, with added elements of the supernatural, mystical, and prophetic. Similar to his praise of Maistre as "mystique de la tradition,"⁵ Barbey's admiration for these acute powers of perception that deftly reveal historical truth, extends from the works of Joseph de Maistre to other writers, such as Comte Arthur de Gobineau: "It is History," writes Barbey about Gobineau's penetrating gaze, "which appears, is stirred up, seen and even *heard*, like in a Witch's enchanted mirror—so says popular Belief—through which things are revealed that are no longer in the present, dead in the past or unfinished in the future."⁶

³ Barbey, "M. Henri Martin," in *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique I*, 416.

⁴ Stephen Bann, *The Clothing of Clío: A Study of the Representation of History in Nineteenth-Century Britain and France* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 2.

⁵ Barbey, "J. de Maistre," in *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique III*, 73.

⁶ Barbey, "Le Comte de Gobineau," *Ibid.*, 348.

Maistre represents a later incarnation in a long line of thinkers—such as St. Augustine, Montaigne and Pascal⁷—who adhere to this concept of hermeneutics influenced by the theological notion of *deus asconditus*, but with a much stronger emphasis on mysticism. Barbey, by refashioning the concept into a functional tool of historical criticism, skillfully combines the theological, the historical, and the interpretive in order to transform himself into a quasi-historian in the same vein as Joseph de Maistre. In the preface to Volume 8 of *Les Oeuvres et les hommes*, entitled “Sensations d’histoire,” Barbey describes the perspicacious force of this combined method of criticism and historical judgment:

The author of *Les oeuvres et les hommes* is (he believes) the first writer to have introduced into literary Criticism this Catholic mindset whose presence is felt in everything he has ever published. In his eyes, if Catholicism, this sublime synthesis that can embrace everything, does not explain everything since not everything can or should be explained, it at least gives (which no philosophy can) an absolute and thus sufficient reason for what cannot nor should not be explained... Until now, [Barbey the critic] had judged historians and their ideas, but this time he has become an historian himself... Almost everywhere he has condemned what [the other critics] have absolved and absolved what they have condemned, and thus through Criticism he has penetrated into History.⁸

Barbey constructs his traditionalist stance through his reading of Maistre and his reformulations of great thinkers taken primarily from seventeenth-century classicism. One detects, for example, a marked resemblance between La Rochefoucauld’s notion of judgment in criticism, as described in his *Maximes et pensées diverses* (1678), and Barbey’s description in the above quotation. Comparing the two, Barbey appears in a way to have taken upon himself to render a ‘Catholized’ version of Maxim 97:

We are mistaken if we think that intelligence and judgement are two different things. Judgement is merely the magnitude of the light that resides

⁷ For example, from Fragments 274 and 275 of Pascal’s *Pensées* (1670) [ed. Gérard Ferreyrolles (Paris: Librairie Générale Française, 2000), 188. “There is enough light for those who want only to see, and enough darkness for those of an opposite inclination... God wanted to hide... God therefore being hidden, any religion that does not say that God is hidden is not true. And any religion that does not teach this is not instructive. Ours does all that. *Vere tu es deus absconditus*.” See Lucien Goldmann’s *Le dieu caché: étude sur la vision tragique dans les Pensées de Pascal et dans le théâtre de Racine* (1959) and Philippe Sellier’s *Pascal et Saint Augustin* (1970).

⁸ Barbey, “Préface, Sensations d’histoire,” in *Barbey d’Aurevilly: Œuvre critique II*, 907.

in the intelligence; its light plumbs the very depths of things, where it draws attention to everything that deserves notice and perceives what-ever had seemed imperceptible. We must agree, therefore, that all the results commonly ascribed to judgement are really produced by the breadth of the light that resides in the intelligence.⁹

Like a divine light or *logos*, judgment for Barbey and La Rochefoucauld necessitates such an emanation in order to come closest to an ideal form of criticism.

Returning to the Aurevillian-Maistrian paradigm of spiritualism and historicism, there necessarily remains, according to some divine plan, distortion and shadows in man's vision of the past. Pierre Glaudes provides us with a description of the hermeneutics of Maistre's historicism, informed by what Glaudes calls his "esoteric culture:"

Convinced of the omnipresence of the supernatural in the visible world, he considers the cosmos to be an immense text whose signs, like hieroglyphics, must be patiently decyphered. True knowledge is gained indirectly through "correspondence," resting upon the principle of universal analogy.¹⁰

Taking inspiration from Maistre's model of 'universal analogy', Barbey's 'sublime synthesis' (Catholicism) acts as an extenuation of this principle of divine mystery at the heart of epistemology and, thus, plays a central role in understanding the past. Elements of pre- or early-modern theories and methodologies, whether they be more akin to medieval mysticism or to philosophical discourses of the *Grand siècle*, are resurrected by Maistre and Barbey in opposition to the nineteenth-century empiricism and scientism that seek to reveal nature's (and God's) deepest secrets.

As Joseph de Maistre is strongly influenced by the philosophies of Bossuet and Malebranche,¹¹ Barbey likewise vaults himself wholeheartedly toward these models of the past and, in doing so, moves against the grain and in opposition to his contemporaries. Both Maistre and Barbey assume their places as iconoclasts and champions of an

⁹ François de La Rochefoucauld, "Maxim 97," in *Collected Maxims and Other Reflections*, trans. E.H. and A.M. Blackmore and Francine Giguère (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 28.

¹⁰ Pierre Glaudes, *Joseph de Maistre et les figures de l'histoire*, 11.

¹¹ For further discussion of where their philosophies converge and differ, particularly concerning the notion of Providence, see Louis Arnould's *La Providence et le bonheur d'après Bossuet et Joseph de Maistre* (1917), as well as the works of M. Battini, Jean-Yves Pranchère, Philippe Barthelet, and Carolina Armenteros.

anti-progressive form of historiography. "Eschewing the great narrative of combative and triumphant modernity," writes Antoine Compagnon in *Les antimodernes: De Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes*, "the intellectual and literary adventure of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has always faltered before the dogma of progress, resisting nationalism, rationalism, Cartesianism, the Enlightenment, historical optimism—or determinism, positivism, materialism, mechanization, intellectualism, and associationism."¹² Compagnon designates Barbey, along with Chateaubriand and Baudelaire, as one of the "heroes of anti-modernity... captivated by the movement of history but incapable of mourning the past;"¹³ a designation due in particular to his extensive reach through all six of Compagnon's *topoi* of antimodernity—from the politico-historical figure of the counter-revolutionary to the master rhetorician of vituperation. One of Barbey's most popular non-fiction works, *Les prophètes du passé*, also serves as an important template for Compagnon's analysis of the anti-progressive aspects of Maistre's historicism, just as it has served for generations as one of the most significant points of entry into analysis of Maistre's work and reception in the nineteenth century.

Pierre Glaudes comes to similar conclusions regarding their joint status as antimodern prototypes, but more specifically in terms of their prose style and shared 'aesthetic values'.¹⁴ In the face of burgeoning rationalism and atheism in nineteenth-century France, Barbey's critical *modus operandi*, "is embedded in a vision of the world founded on Christian metaphysics, from which arises a morality and social model... Barbey's criticism, fundamentally *reactionary*, indeed constructs itself in opposition to the instituted criticism."¹⁵ By placing Providentialism at the heart of historical interpretation and theodicy at the very foundation of history, both Maistre and Barbey set themselves apart from

¹² Antoine Compagnon, *Les antimodernes: de Joseph de Maistre à Roland Barthes* (Paris: NRF/Éditions Gallimard, 2005), 11.

¹³ Ibid., 9 and 13. Compagnon structures his analyses around six figures of antimodernity and their 'expressions': (1) Politico-historical/Counter-revolutionary Figure, (2) Philosophical/Anti-Enlightenment Figure, (3) Ethical-Existential/Pessimistic Figure, (4) Theological/Original Sin Figure, (5) Aesthetic/Sublime Figure, and (6) Stylistic/Vituperation or Imprecation Figure. Both Maistre and Barbey span more or less all six *topoi*, making them the ideal models of antimodernity.

¹⁴ "For both writers share, in large part, the same aesthetic values that set them apart from literary modernity." Pierre Glaudes, "Barbey d'Aurevilly," in *Joseph de Maistre: Œuvres*, 1133.

¹⁵ Glaudes, "Introduction générale," *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique I*, xvi.

their peers—largely to the detriment of their renown and position in the pantheon of nineteenth-century intellectuals—, while at the same time enjoying in some quarters a highly respected singularity of expression and authority.

Barbey's historicism, however, is presented under the guise of a self-proclaimed critical, rather than theoretical discourse. Unlike Maistre, he prefers to remain in a position once-removed from theorizing—in a constant state of critical and polemical discourse—, insisting to his readers: "And here, I pray you to take good note of it, I am not positing any theory, I am not referring to any metaphysics! I merely read History."¹⁶ Barbey's acerbic prose and often quite personal attacks make up the core of his criticism and provide an entertaining shock value for his readers, but it is precisely this vigorous and animated prose combined with a remarkable erudition that enables him to inhabit the text, evaluate its merits, and then proceed to course through it, interjecting his own ideas here and there. Rather than simply 'read' history, as he so disingenuously states in the above quotation, Barbey seeks to go beyond such surface critiques and re-inscribe the historical object through his criticism—penetrating remarkably and effortlessly from *l'œuvre* to *l'homme*. Whether it be the historian *reading* the past or the critic *reading* the historian, the work of interpreting the past and evaluating this interpretation represents quasi-acts of divination or soothsaying for Barbey. This is the basis for his praise of Joseph de Maistre, "mystic of tradition"¹⁷ and "Genius of Insight,"¹⁸ as well as his admiration for the kind of 'historical divination'¹⁹ practiced by the likes of Gobineau. In addition to Joseph de Maistre and Gobineau, Barbey especially praises Thomas Carlyle for his *History of the French Revolution*, finding his acuity and historical method comparable to Maistre's level of genius:

It is the passion of History itself, the passion of narrative, independent of the ideas or feelings he expresses... He espouses no theory. No system of preconceived notions intrudes upon his historical method, at a time when every historian has the gall to try to create more or less a philosophy of History... His history is simply an expression of passion

¹⁶ Barbey, "Le dossier dans l'Histoire—Du gouvernement personnel," in *Polémiques d'hier* (Paris: Albert Savine, 1889), 231.

¹⁷ Barbey, "J. de Maistre," in *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique III*, 73.

¹⁸ Barbey, *Les prophètes du passé*, ed. David Cocksey (Paris: Éditions du Sandre, 2006), 46.

¹⁹ Barbey, "Le Comte de Gobineau," in *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique III*, 347.

and life. What am I saying? It is a resurrection. I called him one day a *resurrectionist*.²⁰

Historians or, as Barbey refers to them, ‘judges of the dead,’ perform their finest work when they attempt to achieve a transcendental objectivity in their prose style and methodology, much like Barbey endeavors to achieve in his own essays of criticism.

A hyper-historicism, coupled with revelatory powers, therefore takes precedence over all other methodologies in the pursuit of knowledge and truth. Barbey provides us once again with a ravishing account of Maistre’s historical genius:

It is always and already the tactic of this unique philosopher among philosophers to respond to the pretensions and impudence of metaphysics with history. Joseph de Maistre is indeed a historical genius *par excellence*. In a time like ours, which pretends to no longer believe in anything but History, we should thus greatly honor this Joseph de Maistre, whom we have made into a utopian of religious supernaturalism, as the thinker who has developed and explored in detail the meaning of History the most in his works. He only believes in [History].²¹

History, as the record of God working through man, thus replaces any metaphysics as an instrument for understanding the world. Writing in two different essays, Maistre himself refers to history as “experimental politics”²² and transforms it into a sort of divine emanation in which one must have faith: “And if reasoning eludes our minds let us at least *believe* history, which is experimental politics,” he writes.²³ Instead of relying on *a priori* structures and what he and Barbey would consider twisted logic (as twisted as a “Protestant Bible,”²⁴ Barbey says at one point), Maistre claims simply to speak about historical *facts* and to reveal these as manifestations of God’s divine plan. Writing against the Enlightenment idea of individual sovereignty and the possibility of man generating his own political constitution, Maistre states in *Essai*

²⁰ Barbey, “Th. Carlyle,” *Ibid.*, 453.

²¹ Barbey, “J. de Maistre,” *Ibid.*, 73.

²² Maistre, Joseph de, “Préface,” *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines*, ed. Pierre Manent (Paris: Complexe, 2006), 197. See Pierre Glaudes’s discussion of “la politique expérimentale” in his introduction to Maistre’s *Essai sur le principe générateur*, and in his edition’s dictionary entry, “Histoire.” *Joseph de Maistre Œuvres*, 1191–93.

²³ Maistre, *Considerations on France*, ed. and trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 104.

²⁴ Barbey, “Historiographes et historiens,” *Barbey d’Aurevilly: Œuvre critique I*, 359.

sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques, “Perhaps the greatest folly of an age of folly was to believe that fundamental laws could be written *a priori*, whereas they are obviously the work of a force superior to man.”²⁵ Enemies of the *a priori*—for it posits a truth outside of the Absolute Truth of God’s will and implies an alternate generator of history—, both Maistre and Barbey hold steadfastly to their shared vision of the workings of Providence and man’s instrumentalization throughout the course of history. The French Revolution, on whose face its “*satanic* character Joseph de Maistre had seen,”²⁶ according to Barbey, serves an essential purpose as a prime vehicle for working through their theories on Providentialism and historiography.

The notions of theodicy and expiation are particularly pronounced and repeatedly emphasized in Maistre’s *Considérations sur la France* and Barbey’s *Les prophètes du passé*. Writing in *Considérations sur la France*, Maistre affirms:

Everything is understood, everything is explained when we return to the great cause. Everything is revealed when we start from there. ... We cannot repeat too often that men do not lead the Revolution; it is the Revolution that uses men. They are right when they say *it goes all alone*. This phrase means that never has the Divinity shown itself so clearly in any human event. If the vilest instruments are employed, punishment is for the sake of regeneration.²⁷

Thus, at the heart of the Maistrian and Aurevillian critique of the Revolution, lies a fundamental anti-anthropocentrism and irreversibility of events which, in turn, lead to justification of human suffering. In *Les Prophètes du passé*, Barbey reaches beyond his analysis of the cataclysmic events of the French Revolution and the extolling of Maistre’s extraordinary prescience by making a bold case for the absolute primacy of *Tradition* (as embodied in the Catholic Church) in all matters:

There is an institution in history that goes back to the beginning of thought and matter; all the way to the fundamental axiom from which human society sprung like a living mathematics. Only the Catholic

²⁵ Maistre, *Essay on the Generative Principle of Political Constitutions and Other Human Institutions*, trans. Laurence M. Porter, in *The Works of Joseph de Maistre*, Section XIII.

²⁶ Barbey, “Conclusion,” *Les prophètes du passé*, 123. See Philippe Berthier’s “Barbey d’Aurevilly, Lecteur de la Révolution,” *Revue d’histoire littéraire de la France*, 90–4/5 (July–October 1990), 779–95 for a detailed analysis of Maistre’s influence on Barbey’s reading of the French Revolution and, more generally, the prominent role he plays in the development of Barbey’s ideas on history.

²⁷ Maistre, *Considerations on France*, 7–8.

Church understands the past in its entirety because it captures man in his immutable essence... Every society, like every philosophy, comes down to a theodicy. A theodicy is the end of all the problems in the contemplation of humanity—it is the final word of all civilizations!²⁸

Joseph de Maistre's earlier conceptualization of this paradigm of historical understanding as theology serves as a formidable counterpoint to the dominant narrative of nineteenth-century 'free thinkers' and 'philosophers by systems', to whom Barbey refers so derisively. Barbey seems to have transposed Maistre's disdain for Enlightenment thinkers and empiricists to his own severely negative criticism of rationalist and materialist philosophy, as espoused in particular by Hegel and Comte—the latter representing a "Godless Mystic,"²⁹ or a corrupted, atheistic version of Joseph de Maistre. Each of these philosophers thus becomes representative of a false modernity and morphs into a sort of boogeyman and synecdoche for corrupted (and corrupting) philosophy in general. For example, in Maistre's statement that, "Locke is famous because we are stupefied, and we are stupefied because we believed him,"³⁰ we encounter just one of the many uses of philosopher as ammunition for the purposes of critiquing the overall lack of a theological perspective in the modern era. Similarly, Barbey's (often reductionist) rants against the dominant philosophy of his time permeate his entire body of criticism, much like the 'Cartesian contagion' he describes in the following passage:

Nineteenth-century philosophy is the *Cogito ergo sum* of Descartes, manipulated, reworked, enriched, driven in all directions, worn out in all its possibilities, pushed to the ultimate extremes, and wallowing in this nihilism that no longer provides answers—where every philosophy that begins from the notion of man comes to fatally engulf itself... Cartesian philosophy does indeed travel through Fichte's idealism as much as Berkeley's; and through Kant's transcendentalism as much as Hegel's pantheism or Schelling's mystico-naturalism.³¹

²⁸ Barbey, *Les prophètes du passé*, 102.

²⁹ Barbey, "Philosophie politique," in *Les œuvres et les hommes* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), 1: 296. Barbey is also concerned by what he sees as Comte's dangerous mixing of atheistic materialism and social study—what Barbey specifically refers to as a "deification of humanity" within an endless, classificatory inventory of social phenomena via "tiny, cleverly numbered boxes." Ibid., 296, 304.

³⁰ Maistre, *Five Paradoxes for Madame la Marquise de Nav...*, trans. Richard A. Lebrun, in *The Works of Joseph de Maistre*, 329. For an example of a more targeted attack on Locke's philosophy and a much more extensive treatment of the ideas presented in his *Essay on Human Understanding*, see the "Sixième entretien" in Maistre's *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*.

³¹ Barbey, *Les prophètes du passé*, 31–2.]

Barbey consistently distills philosophies (especially Hegelian and Comtian) into what he believes to be their essence and then deploys them as epithets that punctuate his attacks on historians and other philosophers. In the case of Hegel, Barbey rails against his godless historical materialism at every opportunity. He shows no mercy for authors such as Victor Cousin, whose deism—"this *atheism in disguise*"—joined to a Hegelian-like materialism, leaves our critic in an utter state of contempt. Cousin, according to Barbey, "went to ask for alms at Hegel's door, who gave him some, and [then] came back to Paris in order to make counterfeit money with the few pennies that Hegel gave him."³²

Wielding "scale, sword, and cross"³³—the blason of Aurevillian criticism—Barbey heeds Maistre's warnings in *Considérations sur la France* against, "modern philosophy [which] is at the same time too materialistic and too presumptuous to perceive the real mainsprings of the political world."³⁴ Such philosophies, according to Maistre, fail to take into account to any significant degree the evil wrought on the world: "There is nothing but violence in the universe; but we are spoiled by a modern philosophy that tells us *all is good*, whereas evil has tainted everything, and in a very real sense, *all is evil*, since nothing is in its place."³⁵ For these two *antimodernes*, the ongoing struggle of what Maistre calls a "fight to the death between Christianity and philosophy"³⁶ rages on. A fundamentally skeptical modern philosophy continues to be, in their eyes, entirely incompatible with Christian faith. Interestingly, however, Maistre's insistence that there is only violence in the world recalls Hegel's own "history as this slaughter-bench,"³⁷ and both philosophers present 'systems' (although Barbey would vehemently deny that Maistre espouses any kind of philosophical 'system') centered on Providence and theodicy.³⁸ Yet, the reconciliation of

³² Barbey, "M. Cousin," in *Les quarante médaillons de l'Académie* (Paris: Bernard Grasset, 2007), 19–20.

³³ This is Barbey's rhetorical 'call to arms' tempered by justice and piety, and epitomizing his method of criticism. Barbey, "Notre Critique et la leur," in *Les œuvres et les hommes*, 26: 93.

³⁴ Maistre, *Considerations on France*, 57.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 31.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 45.

³⁷ G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, trans. Leo Rauch (Indianapolis, IN and Cambridge, MA: Hackett Publishing Co., 1988), 15–18.

³⁸ Some other examples of strange parallels between Hegel and the Maistrian-Aurevillian historical paradigm: "The truth, then, [is] that there is a divine providence

Tradition and Modernity in historiography and philosophy is an impossibility, so long as Reason replaces God in such philosophies.³⁹

As we have seen, Barbey makes a clear distinction between historians of Maistre's caliber—the ones who seem to reflect perfectly and channel directly the past through a process of revivification—and those historians of so-called 'progressive' methodologies that rely erroneously on an endless supply of historical facts and sources to 'tell' history, as if they were treating the physical remains of an historical body while woefully neglecting its soul. As Barbey so succinctly puts it in *Les Prophètes du passé*, "As for me, I only believe the human soul in history."⁴⁰ Like his admiration for Carlyle's *resurrectionist*-style historiography, Barbey repeatedly commends Maistre, Gobineau, and their ilk for delving deeply into an examination of historical *actors* rather than remaining on the surface of historical actions:

These are not historians behind events, but at the very heart of events; historians who dare to make History think and write by those who made it themselves and who, by a wonderful, retrospective intuition, take it from the human source from which it arose—within the reawakened consciousness of those who created it.⁴¹

For Barbey, examination of the past—*doing* history—is really the only means through which we can approach most closely absolute truth and understanding—*not*, certainly, through the intellectual acrobatics of rationalist historical methodologies. He provides us with clear and forceful words of warning about straying from the one true epistemology:

The more we distance ourselves from the Past, the more we will distance ourselves from revealed Truth!—from instruction—, from the origin

presiding over the events of the world... ; "To explain history... means to reveal the passions of human beings, their talents, their active powers. This definiteness of providence is what is usually taken for its plan. Yet it is this very plan that is supposed to be hidden from our view, so that we would be presumptuous to want to understand it...," and "[T]he divine wisdom, i.e., Reason, is one and the same on the large scale and on the small...—as in the realm of nature, so in the realm of spirit that is active and actual in the world. To that extent our approach is a theodicy, a justification of the ways of God." G.W.F. Hegel, *Introduction to the Philosophy of History*, 15–18.

³⁹ For an overview and general analysis of Maistre's readings of Kant and Locke, see Jean-Yves Pranchère's dictionary entries for these philosophers in *Joseph de Maistre: Œuvres*.

⁴⁰ Barbey, "Épilogue," *Les prophètes du passé*, 103fn.

⁴¹ Barbey, "Le Comte de Gobineau," in *Barbey d'Aurevilly: Œuvre critique III*, 346.

where everything exists not according to man, whom God alone begins and completes, but according to God.⁴²

Other methods outside of a Providentialist historiography simply will not do. Whether ridiculing the historian Adolphe Thiers's lack of intellectual rigor and inability to cite sources, or François Guizot's insipid prose, Barbey rarely fails to live up to his reputation as an iconoclast and defender of the *Catholic* brand of historiography.⁴³

Elsewhere, Barbey continues to insist on a mystical and divine underpinning for the proper kind of historical thinking—the hallmark of the idolized Joseph de Maistre, “historian of Providence.”⁴⁴ According to Barbey, Maistre’s historical method, “whether it speaks or remains silent, is a revelation of every essential truth about man and society, these two beings who will never be separated!”⁴⁵ In contrast, Barbey writes derisively in his critique of Léopold von Ranke’s *Histoire de France*, “There are people, as we know, who will call this progress.”⁴⁶ The ‘this’ is in reference to Ranke’s historical method, representative of nineteenth-century rationalism in historiography. The idea of the progressive historian as mere collector of facts, maker of inventories, and impersonal vessel of indifference greatly distresses Barbey. This contention continues to traverse the evaluations of historians whose methodologies are influenced by Comtian positivism, Rankian historicism, and scientism in general.

Barbey finds the rationalist historians of the nineteenth century, such as Ernest Renan, Henri Martin, and Hippolyte Taine, to be nothing more than reporters of historical facts churning out dull, lifeless prose who write *soul-less* history. Idolization and praise of these progressive methodologies among his contemporaries becomes accusation and recrimination in Barbey’s criticism, whereby he discounts the rationalist ideals of impersonality and indifference: “The historian cannot forget his moral character when he writes history, as much as the critic himself who will be judging him” (‘moral character’ being, of course, a code word for *Catholic* piety).⁴⁷ Harking back to Maistre,

⁴² Barbey, “Épilogue,” *Les prophètes du passé*, 101.

⁴³ See “M. Thiers” and “M. Guizot” in Barbey’s *Les quarante médaillons de l’Académie*, 43–8 and 94–102, for examples of his harsh condemnation of their historical methodology.

⁴⁴ Barbey, “J. de Maistre,” in *Barbey d’Aureville: Œuvre critique III*, 76.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 73.

⁴⁶ Barbey, “Léopold Ranke,” *Ibid.*, 305.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

Barbey refuses to allow misguided philosophical rationalism to evacuate the sacredness of history and to disassociate the ethical and moral dimensions from historical writing. Historical interpretation involves not only individual agency and subjectivity, but also mediation—"a judgment pronounced by man in the name of God and truth,"⁴⁸ as Barbey describes it.

We have attempted to demonstrate that the infatuation with Joseph de Maistre on the part of Barbey is quite pronounced and resurfaces at several points. Besides devoting pages of laudatory criticism to posthumous editions of Maistre's works, Barbey also freely employs him as a barometer when evaluating the work of other historians and political philosophers. Although he includes Bonald, Chateaubriand, and Lamennais along with Joseph de Maistre in his *Prophètes du passé*, one easily comes away with the distinct impression that Maistre remains the truest Prophet among them—the real darling of the order. The extra attention paid to Maistre (and, to some extent, Lamennais) becomes apparent when perusing the appendices and annexes dedicated to the two authors. Here we find one of Barbey's most passionate defenses of Joseph de Maistre's legacy and works, these "these writings of the most glorious unity of conviction and the most formidable logic."⁴⁹ Maistre's powers of 'historical revelation' remain unparalleled.

Charles Baudelaire, a great admirer of both Maistre and Barbey, recognizes the pair's shared vision, referring specifically to Barbey as "the Catholic dandy," and ("an absolutely Catholic, authoritarian and unequivocal writer"⁵⁰). The concept of authority occurs in several permutations throughout Maistre and Barbey's writings, and is exhaustively deployed by both as an instrument of theoretical justification and as a metonym for Catholicism and royal sovereignty. Whether in the sense of divine justice, monarchical sovereignty, aesthetic judgment,⁵¹ or

⁴⁸ Barbey, "Granier de Cassagnac," in *Les œuvres et les hommes*, 20: 38.

⁴⁹ Barbey, "Appendix," *Les prophètes du passé*, 141.

⁵⁰ Baudelaire, Charles. *Œuvres complètes I*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1975), 195 and 645. These descriptions of Barbey are included in Baudelaire's notes to his lawyer as testimony to his witness's upstanding character and to bolster corroborative evidence that *Les Fleurs du mal* do not represent a work of moral turpitude. *Les Fleurs du mal* can, in many ways, be seen as a poetic expression in line with the Maistrian-Aurevellian concept of Providence and theodicy.

⁵¹ Barbey often tends to subsume the term 'authority' within its functional apparatus of 'judgment' or criticism. See "Notre critique et la leur" (1858) for Barbey's most succinct pronouncement concerning his critical methodology. *Les œuvres et les hommes*, 26: 80–93.

textual authorship, “Everything is decided by authority and that is a very good thing,” as Joseph de Maistre states in the *Quatrième Paradoxe*.⁵² Particularly in regard to aesthetic judgment, Maistre argues that its authority rests in a “tribunal of the beautiful”—a sort of aesthetic *doxa* or tradition based on socio-historical circumstances—that has suffered in a post-revolutionary era.⁵³ Maistre duly laments this loss: “Finally, Madam, everywhere I find authority on one side, [I find] condescension, weariness, or lack of concern on the other. But nowhere do I find a sure principle to which I can attach myself. Everything is doubtful, everything is problematic.”⁵⁴ Returning to Baudelaire’s description of Barbey’s authoritarianism, he seems to be expressing his appreciation for the force of Aurevillian prose coupled with a fervent piety, deftly positioning his *authorial* authority as being devoid of any moral impurities (almost as if Barbey himself were transmitting from on high) in order to strengthen his defense of *Les Fleurs du mal* by adding to his case a figure of moral rectitude.⁵⁵

Paul Verlaine, when examining Barbey and describing his peculiar and mercurial nature, also perceives an enhanced authoritarianism on his part, comparing him favorably to Maistre:

There are several men inside M. Barbey d’Aureville: an unrivaled novelist, an extreme Catholic, an *authoritarian who would make de Maistre turn pale*, an often detestable and always controversial critic—he presents many faces to the world and many facets of malice.⁵⁶

Verlaine then proceeds to inject himself into the question of whether history will grant Barbey due praise and posthumous relevancy, while at the same time recognizing his unfortunate relegation to the overshadowed minority. At around the same time, comparative assessments of Maistre and Barbey, and arguments over their future posterity extend, curiously enough, all the way to America. In his article “Two French Men of Letters” (the two men being Flaubert and Barbey), the

⁵² Maistre, *Five Paradoxes for Madame la Marquise de Nav...*, trans. Richard A. Lebrun, in *The Works of Joseph de Maistre*, ed. Richard A. Lebrun, 312.

⁵³ See Glaudes’s dictionary entry, “Beau,” for a detailed analysis of Maistre’s concept of aesthetic judgment (in *Joseph de Maistre Œuvres*.)

⁵⁴ Maistre, *Five Paradoxes for Madame la Marquise de Nav...*, 322.

⁵⁵ Ironically, Barbey will later have to defend his own work of fiction, *Les diaboliques*, against similar charges of “outrance morale.”

⁵⁶ (emphasis mine) Paul Verlaine, “*Les œuvres et les hommes par J. Barbey d’Aureville*,” in *Œuvres en prose complètes*, ed. Jacques Borel (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1972), 612.

Atlantic Monthly magazine's literary critic lambasts Barbey's dandified megalomania, his penchant for a "certain mysticism of tone" influenced by Poe but more akin to Hawthorne and, more importantly for our subject here, his lack of the "keenness of intellect and logical faculty of Joseph de Maistre."⁵⁷ Continuing his evaluation, the author opines that Barbey presents himself as "a costume, a pose, a mood, rather than a man." Rounding out the ridicule, he conjectures: "We can see little in the genius of Barbey d'Aurevilly or in this record of his life to warrant any sanguine belief in the permanency of his late-found fame." In this American critic's opinion, Barbey d'Aurevilly is no more than a foppish pastiche of the great figure Joseph de Maistre.

The title of Barbey's massive work of criticism, the twenty-six volume collection *Les Oeuvres et les hommes*, recalls Maistre's formula in the *Cinquième Paradoxe*: "Books resemble men."⁵⁸ This aphorism certainly applies just as well to Barbey's discursive encounters with Maistre. In so much as Barbey's reading of Maistre provides the intellectual justification for his conversion to Catholicism—as Jacques Petit argues in his doctoral thesis, "Barbey d'Aurevilly, Critique"⁵⁹—so, too, does Barbey instinctively absorb virtually all aspects of Maistrian ideology and prose style. Their mutual preference for rhetorical authoritarianism evokes the image of a stern *paterfamilias* (or, perhaps, a vengeful Pagan god?) who dispenses harsh, verbal discipline like bolts of lightning. For Barbey, Maistre represents at once the wise patrician, the witty man of genius, and the martyr ("this loveable, unfortunate and misunderstood man").⁶⁰ Together, they march righteously through posterity, brandishing their indignation and putting themselves forward as God's faithful warriors of the historical Word.⁶¹

⁵⁷ "Two French Men of Letters," *Atlantic Monthly*, 68 (1891), 695–701.

⁵⁸ Maistre, *Five Paradoxes for Madame la Marquise de Nav...*, 325.

⁵⁹ Jacques Petit, *Barbey d'Aurevilly, Critique*, Thèse de doctorat à l'université de Paris (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1963), 89.

⁶⁰ Barbey, "À côté de la grande Histoire," in *Les œuvres et les hommes*, 21: 229.

⁶¹ Like Barbey, Frederick Gentz was a reader of Maistre who was tempted by Catholicism and had a keen historical interest. See, in this volume, Raphaël Cahen's essay, "The Correspondence of Frederick von Gentz: Receiving *Du pape* in the German-speaking World."

AUGUSTE COMTE'S READING OF MAISTRE'S *DU PAPE*: TWO THEORIES OF SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY

Tonatiuh Useche Sandoval

Introduction¹

It is no secret that Auguste Comte (1798–1857) had a high opinion of Joseph de Maistre's (1753–1821) thought, which he certainly discovered through the master of his youth, Saint-Simon.² So it is hardly surprising that Comte shared an admiration for the work of the Savoyard author with the Saint-Simonians. In 1826, Comte wrote: "M. de Maistre presented the most methodical, most profound, and most precise display of the old spiritual organisation."³ What interested the former Polytechnic student in this work devoted to the leader of Catholicism [*Du pape*] was Maistre's 'methodical' approach to the question. At the same time, though, he excluded the counter-revolutionary doctrine contained in the book. It was certainly necessary to put an end to the Revolution. However, he did not think that the solution consisted in restoring the old powers to the leaders of society. This would mean accomplishing historical regression. Restoring the past to the present actually implies going backwards, in other words, marching from the present towards the past and reversing the course of history. From a doctrinal point of view, for Comte, Maistre represented the leader of the "retrograde school" and consequently, an adversary to combat.⁴ Nevertheless, Comte and Maistre felt the same admiration for the

¹ This article was translated from French by Richard A. Lebrun.

² The article owes much to the advice of my thesis director, Michel Bourdeau, to Professor Richard Lebrun's corrections, and to the diligence of Dr. Carolina Armenteros. I thank them most sincerely.

³ Auguste Comte, "Considérations sur le pouvoir spirituel," in *Système de politique positive*, (Paris: Société positiviste, 1929, original edition Paris, 1851–1854), Appendix, 4: 196. The appendix includes the principle works written by A. Comte in the 1820s. Hereafter the *Système de politique positive* is cited as "S," followed by the volume and page number.

⁴ See the article by Bernard Valade, "La critique comtienne de l'école rétrograde," in *Auguste Comte et l'idée de science de l'homme*, eds. Michel Bourdeau and François Chazel (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2002).

European monarchy of the popes and shared a common sadness in observing the downfall of the Catholic constitution.⁵

The purpose of this paper is to examine the notion of spiritual authority from the angle of a European bond. By spiritual authority, we understand the moral and intellectual influence that is shown by an authority worthy of faith. Three questions arise. Firstly, there is the question of how a European phenomenon became a common subject of reflection for both authors. What views about Europe brought two such distinct contemporaries together? Then, there are two more conceptual questions. Firstly, how did Joseph de Maistre conceive relations between the papacy and European society in his work on the pope? And secondly, what is Auguste Comte's contribution to the theorisation of spiritual authority undertaken by Maistre?

I. The Convergence Between Maistre and Comte on Two European Phenomena

A. The Critique of the Apparent Spiritual Unity of the Holy Alliance

Although Joseph de Maistre was forty-five years older than Auguste Comte, this does not prevent both men from being considered as contemporaries, that is, two minds steeped in the same period, since they both witnessed the collapse of the Napoleonic Empire. It is remarkable that both criticised, for very similar reasons, the European order that was established in September 1815 with the signing of the Treaty of the Holy Alliance. This treaty was signed on the initiative of Tsar Alexander I, whom Maistre knew well, having carried out the function of ambassador in St. Petersburg from 1803 to 1817. After the victory of

⁵ This sadness seeps through in the Preliminary Discourse of *Du pape*: "Today, the entire clergy of Europe is more or less reduced to such holy though laborious occupations, particularly those in France, who were more directly and more violently struck by the revolutionary tempest. All the flowers of the sacred ministry have been withered by it; only the thorns remain." *The Pope*, trans. Aeneas McD. Dawson (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975, original edition London, 1850), xx. Comte, for his part, felt "a kind of philosophical repugnance" while studying the "spectacle of the destruction" of the Catholic and feudal order, in *Cours de philosophie positive*, 55th lesson (Paris: Hermann, 1975), 2: 384–85. On this point, see Alexandre J.-L. Delamarre, "Le pouvoir spirituel et la ruine de la constitution catholique chez J. de Maistre et A. Comte," in no. CLXXV (1985) of the *Revue de la France et de l'étranger*, devoted to Auguste Comte, 433 and 436. In this article, Delamarre undertakes an analysis of the negative movement, which, from the end of the Middle Ages disorganised European Christianity, in order to study the nature and function of political power in these two authors.

Waterloo, this autocrat was at the origin of the pact by which the sovereigns of Russia, Austria, and Prussia swore mutual assistance and declared themselves brothers and members of "a single Christian nation composed of three branches."

According to Raymond Aron, in his work entitled *Guerre et paix entre les nations*, in the history of European international relations, the Holy Alliance was the best representation of a "homogenous system."⁶ Homogenous systems are those in which the member states belong to the same type of regime and comply with the same political conception. Effectively, the three signatory rulers had become aware of their solidarity and the ideological interests that united them, despite the national interests that set them against one other. The revolutionaries then became the common enemies of all European monarchs and were no longer allies liable to weaken the interior of the opposing camp and to constitute a 'fifth column,' to coin the expression forged by military strategists during the twentieth century. It was in the name of defending the European order and mutual aid between legitimate sovereigns that France joined the Holy Alliance and that the French army crushed the Spanish Revolution in 1823.⁷

Joseph de Maistre was very quick to uncover the false character of the apparent religious homogeneity proclaimed by the system of the Holy Alliance. Behind this fraternity between Orthodox, Protestant, and Catholic, the Savoyard diplomat perceived "the great chimera of *universal Christianity and indifference with respect to all Christian communions, regarded as all equally good*."⁸ Maistre disputed that a vague faith and a pact "in the name of the very holy and indivisible trinity" were capable of maintaining a peaceful society among European peoples. Naturally, this questioning of the Holy Alliance by an active diplomat remained confidential. Let us add that this event was not mentioned in his book, *Du pape*, the work that Comte never ceased to appreciate.

Following the military intervention of the Holy Alliance to crush the Spanish and Neapolitan rebels, Comte challenged this pact in his 1820s

⁶ See Raymond Aron, *Paix et guerre entre les nations* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1984), 108, 118 and 140.

⁷ Ibid., 108, 118, 140.

⁸ See Maistre's letter, written from St. Petersburg, between 22 December 1816 and 3 January 1817, in *Correspondance diplomatique de Joseph de Maistre*, ed. Albert Blanc (Paris: Librairie Nouvelle, 1861), 2: 310.

writings, henceforth keeping his distance with respect to Saint-Simon.⁹ The young Comte observed that the Christian religion was being transformed under the pretext of assuring the armed protection of the kings who professed it. This is why this union of monarchs signified not so much a religious idea as the reality of an international power of coercion, symbolised by “the coalition of all European bayonets.”¹⁰ Evidently, in order to corroborate his denunciation of the seeming religious unity of the Holy Alliance, Comte could not refer to the critiques that Maistre had addressed to this institution in his private correspondence. However, Comte unknowingly discovered and shared Maistre’s position, through the intermediary of the writings of Félicité de Lamennais, a person who was familiar with the work of the Savoyard author and for whom Maistre held esteem.

In 1826, Comte wrote: “M. de la Mennais has very clearly demonstrated that, through its purely temporal character and the radical heterogeneity of its elements... the institution of the Holy Alliance can present neither a real fixedness nor a sufficient efficacy.”¹¹ Effectively, in an article dated 1822, the author of the *Essai sur l’indifférence en matière de religion* emphasised that the Alliance was not based on religion, but rather on a disturbing religious indifference. “Upon what Christianity is the Holy Alliance founded?” Lamennais asked.

“The union of different sects that have neither the same faith nor the same leader, several of which do not even acknowledge any leader are unable to state what their faith is. Therefore, either the Holy Alliance has no foundation, or it assumes that all these sects equally profess Christianity. In the first case, there is really no alliance; in the second, it rests on religious indifference, that is to say, on the same foundation as the revolution it seeks to combat.”¹²

⁹ In 1825, Saint-Simon published a contribution entitled “*Quelques opinions philosophiques à l’usage du XIXe siècle*.” He emphasised that: “the union of the great powers to constitute a supreme European power (sic) has already procured for Europe the greatest of all social goods” it maintains European society in a state of general peace; it renders the morality of the Gospel preponderant in Europe; it offers the best means to operate the transition from the feudal regime to the industrial regime. See *Œuvres de Saint Simon publiées par les membres du conseil institué par Enfantin* (Paris, 1875), 10: 91–101, cited by Guillaume de Berthier de Sauvigny, *La Sainte-Alliance* (Paris: Librairie Armand Colin, 1972), 341–3.

¹⁰ S, Appendix, 4: 34.

¹¹ S, Appendix, 4: 212, footnote 1.

¹² The 1822 article figured in the *Œuvres complètes de F. De La Mennais* (1837), *Mélanges religieux et philosophiques*, (Paris, 1837) 8: 265–273. Also in this volume, there is a long review of *Du pape*, dated 1820.

This exposure of the 'heterogeneity' of the Holy Alliance led Lamennais and Comte to reflect on the notion of spiritual authority, to emphasise the importance for Europe of the "papal revolution," according to the expression used by the American historian Harold J. Berman and consequently to take interest in Joseph de Maistre's book on the papacy.

B. The Affirmation of the "Papal Revolution" in the Constitution of Europe

For Félicité de Lamennais, a Holy Alliance existed between the nations of European Christianity during the Middle Ages. Moreover, religion could only become a motive for alliance "because these nations, united by the same faith, acknowledged spiritual authority." "Until they enter into this holy unity," the author concludes, "there will be no Holy Alliance or spiritual union between the peoples."¹³ For his part, Comte maintained the necessity of re-organising Europe around a new spiritual authority. If he approved Lamennais' critique of the Holy Alliance, it was because the latter had "victoriously established that such an institution was, by its very nature, absolutely incapable of offering modern Europe a real equivalent to the general action exercised in the Middle Ages by the old spiritual authority and that it could only really be replaced by some spiritual influence."¹⁴

The importance of the papacy in the constitution of Christianity and in the emergence of a European society is evident in the work that Joseph de Maistre devoted to this theme: from one perspective "*without the sovereign pontiff, there is no real Christianity*;"¹⁵ from another, "*the Popes were the founders, the tutors, the saviours, and the real constituent minds of Europe*."¹⁶

Comte and Maistre agreed in affirming that the popes were major players in the organisation of medieval Europe. Both these authors put forward the importance of the "papal revolution" in the history of the West. This expression is used to refer to "the major socio-cultural event that unfurled at the end of the eleventh century in Europe ... ordinarily

¹³ Article cited in *Œuvres complètes de F. de La Mennais* (1837), *Mélanges religieux et philosophiques*, 8: 265–273.

¹⁴ S, Appendix, 4: 212, footnote 1.

¹⁵ *Du pape*, eds. Jacques Lovie and Joannès Chetail, (Geneva: Droz, 1966), 18. Hereafter cited as "DP," followed by the page number. The italics are Maistre's.

¹⁶ DP: 293.

described as the 'Gregorian Reform.'¹⁷ The revolution led by the popes between the eleventh and the thirteenth centuries consisted in freeing the Church from the secular powers, enabling it to transform morality and institutions and preside over universal charity on earth.

With respect to the European issue, we have raised two points upon which Auguste Comte and Joseph de Maistre agreed, one direct and another indirect. We will now examine how the author of *Du pape* envisaged the relations between the Sovereign Pontiff and Europe.

II. Joseph de Maistre's Theory of the Relations Between Spiritual Authority and European Society

A. The Relationship Between Papal Governance and European Morality

If Comte approved of the methodical approach that Maistre employed in his study of the papacy, it was because the diplomat did not consider the Sovereign Pontiff in terms of his relation with God, but rather according to his various relations with European society. Moreover, according to Maistre, the Europeans are a population endowed with a distinctive trait: unstable and rebellious morality. The 'Mobile Europe' is defined in contrast with static Asia. "Rest is like torture to the European and this character forms a striking contrast with Oriental immobility. He is essentially active and enterprising; he must innovate, he must change everything that comes within his reach."¹⁸ In short, Europeans are characterised by 'un-rest.' On this subject, Leibniz thought that unrest was one of the expressions of desire, constituting "the main, if not the sole stimulus that incites the industry and activity of men."¹⁹ Because of this anxious character, "above all politics has never ceased to employ the innovative spirit of the *daring sons of Japhet*."²⁰

¹⁷ See Philippe Nemo, *Qu'est-ce que l'Occident?* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 2005), Chapter 4, on the "papal revolution" of the eleventh and thirteenth centuries.

¹⁸ DP: 353.

¹⁹ Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, *Nouveaux essais sur l'entendement humain*, Livre II, chapitre XX, § 6.

²⁰ DP: 353. Let us decipher this image. By evoking the *daring sons of Japhet*, Joseph de Maistre is referring, on the one hand, to an episode in the Old Testament according to which Noah's sons, namely Sem, Cham, and Japhet populated the Orient, Africa, and Europe respectively. On the other hand, he is referring to a passage in Horace's

The characteristic dissatisfaction of Europeans bears a political meaning.

*"The daring race of Japhet has not ceased ... to gravitate towards what is called liberty; that is, towards that state in which the governing power rules and those governed are ruled as little as possible. Always on guard against his masters, the European has sometimes expelled them and sometimes confronted them with laws."*²¹

As a good Hellenist, Maistre was undoubtedly inspired by a very ancient characterisation of the inhabitants of Europe that dates back at least to Aristotle.²² In a passage in his *Politics*, which establishes a comparison between Greece, Europe, and Asia, Aristotle notes that the Europeans are very courageous, although not very intelligent, so that "if they preserve their liberty, they are politically incapable of being disciplined."²³

Given that it is impossible to be free without living in society and impossible to live in society without governance, the whole problem consists in reconciling the unruliness of those governed with the sovereignty of the governors. The rebellious and mobile character of Europe led to a kind of political impasse. Joseph de Maistre affirms that: "The greatest European problem therefore lies in being able to restrain sovereign power without destroying it."²⁴ The danger is twofold: unrestricted obedience exposes those governed to the dangers of tyranny, while anarchical disobedience renders the governors powerless.

Now we are in a position to understand the interrelationship between the pope and European customs. According to Maistre, it is thanks to Catholicism that the Christian doctrine has been able to act on European society. For without the pope, a "clearly defined confession"²⁵ of faith does not exist. The role of the Sovereign Pontiff is exactly that

third Ode that discusses the intrepid line of Japet. Now, among the ancient Greeks, Japet was considered to be the father of Prometheus, who in his turn was regarded as the father of the human race. By an erroneous but revealing confusion, Japet, the Hellenistic father of the human race, is assimilated to Japhet, the biblical ancestor of the Europeans, an assimilation suggesting that for Maistre as well as for many of his contemporaries, Europe constituted the model for humanity.

²¹ DP: 131.

²² For further discussion of Maistre's idea of Europe, see, in this volume, Carolina Armenteros' essay, "Preparing the Russian Revolution: Maistre and Uvarov on the History of Knowledge."

²³ *Politics*, VII, 1327a.

²⁴ DP: 131.

²⁵ DP: 18.

of a “fixing belief,” as Charles Pierce would say.²⁶ For only a stable faith can be effective, i.e., taught, propagated, and applied. Maistre declares: “Without the pope, the divine institution ... is no more than a system, a human belief,”²⁷ or in other words, a belief subject to doubt and instability. Without a stable faith, there can be neither a society nor a collective action by the faithful. Moreover, there is no fixed belief in the absence of a fixing authority.

This fixing, which corrects the mobility of European morality, can only emanate from an indisputable power that Joseph de Maistre calls “infallible.” However, this infallibility is only practical and not theoretical. Maistre notes: “*in practice*, being infallible is the same as erring without appeal.”²⁸ Paradoxically, pontifical infallibility consists in the power to judge without being judged. As a sovereign, the pontiff does not escape the paradox of sovereignty, emphasised by Carl Schmitt, in his 1922 book entitled *Politische Theologie*, upon which Giorgio Agamben remarked in the initial chapter of his work, *Homo sacer*. Agamben expresses the paradox in Schmitt’s terms: “the sovereign lies simultaneously outside and inside the political order,” in effect, he “is on the margin of the juridical order normally in force, everything being subjected to him, because he is responsible for deciding whether the Constitution must be suspended in its totality.” This paradoxical situation can be formulated as such: “I, the sovereign, who am outside the law, declare that nothing is outside the law.”²⁹ This paradox, which

²⁶ Michel Bourdeau exposed this idea in a paper entitled “Le pouvoir spirituel et la fixation des croyances,” on the occasion of a study day on positive politics at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris, 15th June 2007. The article by C. S. Pierce, *The Fixation of Belief* (1877), translated in 1878 under the title *Comment se fixe la croyance*, outlines four methods of affirming faith in the face of doubt, namely the methods of tenacity, authority, *a priori* and the scientific method.

²⁷ DP: 292

²⁸ DP: 194, footnote, Maistre’s italics.

²⁹ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 15. While Giorgio Agamben helps us understand the paradox that involves all sovereignty, the definition that he proposes for political sovereignty is difficult to apply to our reflections on spiritual authority in that this authority refuses to base itself on a power over life and death. According to Giorgio Agamben, in Ancient Rome, *homo sacer* refers to he who it is forbidden from being sacrificed but who is permitted to kill without being condemned for homicide. Thanks to this notion of Ancient Rome and with the intention of understanding the barbarism of the twentieth century, he proposes this general definition of sovereignty: “One will call sovereign the sphere in which one can kill without committing homicide and without holding a sacrifice; and sacred, that is to say exposed to murder and incapable of sacrifice, the life that is captured in this sphere” (p. 93). It is difficult for us to conceive of Pontifical Sovereignty and sacred status in these terms.

resides at the summit of the European hierarchy analysed by Maistre, reappears when Comte seeks to reinvent a European priesthood. "The priesthood [...] thus becomes the consecrator necessary for all human authorities, without the need for any other consecration itself, since it is the direct instrument of supreme authority."³⁰ He who judges must not be judged; he who consecrates must not be consecrated. This is the origin of its sovereignty. Theoretically, an omniscient judge differs from an unassailable judge, but the result remains unchanged: the sentence delivered is no less definitive. Jean-Yves Pranchère emphasised the difficulties of this position, which, by reducing Catholicism to the infallible but arbitrary word of the pope, sacrifices the truth of dogma to the need to fix the faith. Pranchère warns "The danger lurking here is that of a strictly decisionist definition of the magisterium of the Church, proposing the formula that should really be called *de-christianised Catholicism*."³¹

In any case, what prevents the infallible word of the pope from falling into the trap of arbitrariness is the discipline that governs the life of the Sovereign Pontiff and that protects him from the audacity of desire, so marked among the "daring race of Japhet." The fact that the pope must necessarily be "old, unmarried and a priest," Joseph de Maistre observes, "exclude[s] ninety-nine hundredths of all the errors and passions that disturb States."³² Although old age that weakens the libido, the absence of a woman that entails abstinence and the vow of poverty that removes concerns of possession may not render the pope omniscient, this silence of the passions at least renders him reasonable and truthful. The ambivalence of the papal figure ensues from this limitation: he incarnates the idea of paternity, expressed by the Latin word *papa* and he is also deprived of sexual capacity. This is why the jurist Pierre Legendre maintains that the papacy is not this place of tyranny that fantasy envisages. On the contrary, the pope is the serf of a supreme priesthood; he is disposed of his desires by his task as pastor, of which he himself is the first victim.³³

This peace inflicted on desire is what distinguishes monarchy from tyranny. In *The Republic*, Plato characterises the tyrannical man as he

³⁰ *Catéchisme positiviste*, 1852, huitième entretien, 8^e réplique.

³¹ Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières. La philosophie de Joseph de Maistre* (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 349.

³² DP: 194.

³³ Pierre Legendre, *L'amour du censeur, Essai sur l'ordre dogmatique* (Paris: Seuil, 1974), 72.

“who has allowed the tyrant Eros to take up residence in his soul and govern all his movements.” Here, Eros represents love in its disruptive dimension. If the tyrant sows disorder, it is because he is tormented by the “goad of unsatisfied desire.”³⁴ By repressing erotic desire, the pope is not only freed from the principal source of tyranny, but he also acquires the capacity to free others from arbitrariness.

Therefore, popes are a principle of stability and peace, who temper the anxiety, mobility, and audacity of Europeans, whether they are the governors or the governed. This interrelation enables Joseph de Maistre to affirm that: “the authority of the popes was the chosen and constituted power in the Middle Ages for balancing temporal sovereignty and rendering it tolerable to mankind.”³⁵ The pope is the mediator who makes possible the conciliation between the supremacy of the governors and the right of resistance of those governed.

B. The Relation Between the Popes and the European Monarchs

By limiting himself, the Sovereign Pontiff becomes fit to limit the powerful, in other words, to render them similar to him. The papacy contributed to the formation of European institutions by forging the temporal monarchies according to his own model. The coronation ceremony is one of the principal means that the popes have used to create this resemblance and to control the monarchs.³⁶ To prevent the inviolability of the sovereign from degenerating into tyranny, the papacy associated coronation with two major interdicts: prohibiting the act of love based on desire and killing for pleasure, to prevent monarchs from degenerating into tyrants submissive to “all powerful courtesans”³⁷ or into despots covered with the blood of their victims.

Joseph de Maistre presents both these prohibitions, though they appear separately. On the one hand, he recalls that: “love, when it is not tamed ... is a ferocious animal, capable of the most horrible excesses.”³⁸

³⁴ *The Republic*, IX, 572e–573e. Let us recall that Book IX is devoted to an examination of tyranny.

³⁵ DP: 182.

³⁶ Maistre highlights the founding character of this ritual when he suggests that “[e]very sovereignty, whose forehead has not been touched by the Pontiff’s finger will always be inferior to the rest, both in the duration of its reigns as well as in the character of its dignity and the forms of its government,” (DP: 292).

³⁷ DP: 165.

³⁸ DP: 158.

Here, he is not referring to the emotion of love, but rather the sexual instinct: "love mates,"³⁹ he writes in plain language. By sanctifying the royal function, the papacy wanted to tame the sexual desire of the monarchs, so that the marriages of kings and queens become something other than personal and passionate acts.⁴⁰ "For the marriages of princes," Maistre affirms, citing Voltaire, "constitute, in Europe, the destiny of peoples; and there has never been a court wholly surrendered to debauchery, without revolutions and even insurrections."⁴¹

On the other hand, Maistre observes that by abdicating the power to judge for themselves peoples in turn declare kings to be sacred, which is inviolable. Now, not judging by oneself is to refuse to do justice oneself, which leads to the power to punish directly or, in a few words, the power to kill. In effect, according to universal opinion, the right to assassinate is the only right of which the Christian king is deprived. By renouncing this right, in return, the monarchs gain the right not to be assassinated by their subjects.

By consecrating kings and censuring their impulses, the popes sought to render the monarchy "less ferocious and less overwhelming" to their subjects. However, when the censure was powerless, the spiritual authority could intervene without it being deemed as interference, because, as Maistre observes, "the Sovereign Pontiff, is a *foreigner* nowhere in the Catholic Church,"⁴² and consequently nowhere in Catholic Europe. This intervention consisted in authorising the people to disobey whatever did not conform to sacredness. The exception, "in certain cases, the right to revoke the oath of the subject,"⁴³ is the solution the popes found for resisting the sovereign without undermining sovereignty.⁴⁴ For if the disobedience is not authorised by an

³⁹ DP: 272.

⁴⁰ Comte acknowledges that one of the successes of the Catholic priesthood has been to regulate the sexual instinct, the most disturbing of selfish propensities.

⁴¹ DP: 161, citing Voltaire, *Essai sur l'histoire générale* (1764), Vol. III, ch. CI, p. 518 and ch. CII, p. 520.

⁴² DP: 185.

⁴³ DP: 137.

⁴⁴ See on this notion, Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, *Le second sermon pour la fête de la conception de la Sainte Vierge*, first point of the sermon. There, you can read the statement that illustrates the paradox of sovereignty set out above with reference to Giorgio Agamben: "it follows that making laws and granting exemptions, are equally noble rights of sovereign authority and they cannot be separated." Sovereignty is defined by

external authority, it is the source of disorders: to absolving oneself is to revolt.

C. The Threefold Meaning of the European Monarchy

In the Middle Ages, thanks to the action of the spiritual authority, Comte writes: "one could contemplate, what M. de Maistre called, with such a profound aptness, the miracle of the European monarchy."⁴⁵ For Joseph de Maistre this expression implied a threefold reality. Firstly, it meant a type of monarchical organisation present in all the realms of Europe, that is, a temporal monarchy conceived in the image and likeness of the spiritual monarchy, where the sovereignty of the monarch is accepted only on the condition that the sovereign agrees to control his instincts. Henceforth, as Jean-Yves Pranchère emphasises, his power is absolute (without appeal) though it is not completely (unlimited).⁴⁶ Secondly, the European monarchy designates the spiritual power that is responsible for fixing belief and that has unified Europe thanks to its teaching. Thirdly and finally, it expresses European political organisation as a whole. The success of spiritual power consisted in reconciling contradictory terms. It limited and reassured the anxious and daring morality of the Europeans. By consecrating governments, the popes consolidated the temporal powers while censuring the abuses that caused the governed to revolt. By reserving to themselves the right to dispense subjects from obedience, they have freed the right of resistance from its insurrectional character. This is why, following the 'miracle' accomplished by the popes in Europe, Comte affirms that the great political problem that consists in reconciling subordination towards government with the possibility of rectifying its conduct when it is corrupt, has been resolved insofar as possible.⁴⁷

We have seen that in characterising the relations between the Pope and Europe, Joseph de Maistre sought to demonstrate that the existence of a spiritual authority represents a fundamental political player in the formation of society and government on a European scale.

the union of two opposed attributes: the establishment of obligatory rules and exemption from these obligations.

⁴⁵ S, Appendix, 4: 183 and DP: 277.

⁴⁶ Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'Autorité contre les Lumières*, 240.

⁴⁷ S, Appendix, 4: 177.

III. Comte's Theorising: The de-Christianisation of Catholic Spiritual Authority

A. The Notion of Spiritual Authority and the Separation of Organisation and Doctrine

If the book *Du pape* possesses an undeniable philosophical value in Comte's eyes, it is because despite his theological beliefs, the Savoyard author has only dwelled on the positive method in his arguments.⁴⁸ Effectively, "once the monarchical form is established, infallibility is no more than a necessary consequence of *supremacy*.... as this truth depends on the very nature of things," Maistre affirms, "by no means does it need to be supported by theology."⁴⁹ Comte notes that the papacy mixed the rational truth of organisation with the arbitrariness of irrational dogma. Critique of the dangers of the biblical word was not absent from Maistre's work: "read without notes and explanations, the Sacred Scripture is a true poison."⁵⁰ Comte is of the same opinion. Thus, he denounces "the Christian selfishness" that menaces the social bond by chaining each man exclusively to God and to the pursuit of personal salvation. On the contrary, he admires the "priestly wisdom" that limited the dangers of dogma, for example, with the establishment of Purgatory in the twelfth century, which provided the salvation of the soul with a social dimension by asserting that the living could intercede on behalf of the dead. Nevertheless, priestly wisdom has faded away since the priesthood has ceased to be a spiritual player and the ecclesiastical organisation has lost its virtues since the clergy is meanly only interested in its own material prosperity.⁵¹ This theoretical and moral decadence sapped the bases of priestly authority and in the words of

⁴⁸ S, Appendix, 4: 196. A. Delamarre observes that if retrograde thought has the right to positivist recognition, it is because it alone has retained from forgotten history the memory and glory of medieval papacy. Article cited, 433.

⁴⁹ DP: 30.

⁵⁰ Joseph de Maistre puts these words in the mouth of the Count in the last reply of the eleventh and last *entretien* of *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821). See the critical edition by Pierre Glaudes in *Joseph de Maistre: Œuvres* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 774.

⁵¹ See the 55th lesson of the *Cours de philosophie positive*: "Before the end of the fifteenth century, the old supreme leader of the European system was thus gradually transformed into the elective sovereign of a mediocre part of Italy; he had essentially renounced his general and continuing action on various temporal governments, to focus principally on his own territorial enlargement." Ed. Hermann, 2: 403.

Saint-Simon, led to a situation in which “by shaking this old respect that had constituted the strength of the clergy, Luther disrupted Europe.”⁵²

This tension between an arbitrary dogma and an exemplary organisation, although finally unfaithful to its purpose, ended up usurping the ancient spiritual authority. This conflict, signalled by Maistre, led Comte to de-christianise the idea of spiritual authority by freeing the notion from its Christian implications. The papacy represents no more than the configuration of spiritual authority under Western monotheism. The fact remains that this historical precedent made visible the conditions necessary for the existence of all spiritual authority.

Comte acknowledged that Catholicism had found the political model that forms the basis of moral influence by resolving the fundamental question: What authorises the authority? The popes’ response: the separation between spiritual and secular authority, between the influence over minds and the power to restrain bodies. Such is the condition by which authority can detach itself from appearances and capricious feelings, in other words making it capable of generality and generosity, because authority is undermined by arbitrariness and selfishness.

B. The Conditions for Reorganising a New Spiritual Authority

To prevent the dogma from being subjected to individual arbitrariness, it must have a general scope. This is why Auguste Comte deemed it necessary for the spiritual authority to be theoretical. In other words, it must be held by a learned class, rich in the culture of scientific knowledge. The only solution to making the Catholic dogma universally acceptable consists in rendering faith demonstrable. Only positive science is capable of providing the evidence. This is why the young Comte entrusted the new spiritual authority to scholars who “formed an authentic compact and active coalition, in which all the members understood each other and communicated with each other easily and in a continuous way, from one end of Europe to the other.”⁵³

⁵² The title of this piece is very detailed: *De la Réorganisation de la société européenne, ou de la nécessité et des moyens de rassembler les peuples de l'Europe en un seul corps politique, en conservant à chacun sa nationalité, par Henri Saint-Simon et Augustin Thierry, son élève* (1814), see the introductory letter to the parliaments of France and England, § 6.

⁵³ S, Appendix, 4: 75. Subsequently, Comte must have realised that scholars ready to abandon their specializations to construct a general doctrine of the world to society

Besides, in order to prevent the organisation from serving personal interests, it should be motivated like the ancient pontifical structure, by generous and unselfish concerns. To prevent the authority from degenerating into theocracy, it is essential for the spiritual authority to renounce command and consequently the use of force, but also sex and wealth. This control over selfish instincts distances theoretical power from material motives and thus renders it suitable for fulfilling its educational function. It appears that the new spiritual government is no less sacerdotal than the clergy of the Middle Ages. Basically, "no society can survive and develop without some sort of priesthood," which must implement not only a reduction but also "a consecration of selfish instincts."⁵⁴ In Comte's religious elaboration, "each consecration consists in representing the corresponding power as the agent of a generally respected spiritual authority; God under the provisional regime, Humanity in the definitive order."⁵⁵ To be consecrated is to accept to become the servant, even the civil servant, of a sovereign authority, which would be the *Ens Summum*, the Great-Being or even the State.

The true basis of this consecrating power is the confidence it inspires, a confidence that attempts to triumph though its knowledge and indifference. However, there is always the risk that a moral authority, ignorant and self-interested, abuses this confidence and becomes the ideological power described by Marx. For, instead of producing ideas faithfully representing reality, ideology proposes a representation deformed by society; it justifies the supremacy of the powerful,⁵⁶ instead of censuring their selfishness and exercising their altruism. Consequently, the influence of this universal authority must be acknowledged and accepted. Joseph de Maistre observed perfectly well that the spiritual authority of the popes was not imposed, but rather chosen by the nations that had given credit to it.⁵⁷

were rare. This is why, in 1848, he combined women and members of the proletariat with scholarly philosophers to exercise spiritual influence.

⁵⁴ In *Catéchisme positiviste*, 1852, premier entretien, 10^e réplique.

⁵⁵ Ibid., huitième entretien, 8^e réplique.

⁵⁶ "In every ideology, men and their relationships appear to us upside-down like in a *camera obscura*," note Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in *The German Ideology* (1846), Introduction, Part A, 'Ideology in General', point 1, "History."

⁵⁷ DP: 183.

C. The Mission of the Spiritual Authority: To Educate and Establish a Universal Society

Johann Gottlieb Fichte stated that “The scholar’s vocation... is to be the pedagogue of humanity.”⁵⁸ Also for Auguste Comte, the main attribute of an authority founded on science and abstinence is “the supreme direction of education.” This attribute did not escape Joseph de Maistre, who evoked the educational role of the priesthood particularly with respect to European elites:⁵⁹ “Providence had entrusted the Popes with the education of European sovereignty.... The Popes educated the youthful monarchy of Europe; they did so literally, as Fénelon *made* the Duke of Burgundy.”⁶⁰ Comte provides this remark with its full scope. Education is not reduced to the instruction of children of which Montaigne spoke. Besides preparing the youth, it includes “the action exercised on mature men, which is the complement to it and the inevitable consequence.”⁶¹ More fundamentally, to educate means to govern the ideas that in turn govern the world. In short, the action of the spiritual authority consists, on the one hand, as Comte writes, “in establishing by education the opinions and the morals that should guide men in their active life,” and, on the other hand, “in maintaining, by a regular and ongoing moral influence... the practical observation of fundamental rules.” Apart from the transmission of knowledge, the educational task includes the establishment of social norms to respect as well as the censorship of irregular behaviours. This “spiritual repression”⁶² is inevitable given that, although according to Comte, altruistic instincts and selfish tendencies exist, “they are powerful enough among all men to inspire in each one the spontaneous desire for all the pleasures that he can observe in others, regardless of the different conditions.”⁶³ The action of the spiritual authority is therefore inseparable from this “spiritual repression” of the selfishness of desire.

This educational function transcends the nation. To educate is to work for “the ongoing establishment of a uniform education system for

⁵⁸ Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *La destination du savant* (1794) (Paris: Vrin, 1994), 75.

⁵⁹ For an account of the impact of *Du pape* on a marked Europeanist, see, in this volume, Raphaël Cahen’s essay, “The Correspondence of Friedrich von Gentz: Receiving *Du pape* in the German-Speaking World.”

⁶⁰ DP: 276.

⁶¹ S, Appendix, 4: 193.

⁶² S, Appendix, 4: 205.

⁶³ S, Appendix, 4: 204.

diverse populations and the regular influence that is its necessary outcome.”⁶⁴ Thanks to this common system of education and discipline, an intellectual and moral association is established facilitating “the union of all European peoples and in general the greatest number of nations possible.”⁶⁵ The success of the popes in the Middle Ages was to forge this new type of social nature. In 1853, Comte affirmed that in effect, the “general bond” that united the “Western or European republic, consisted purely in the free community of education, worship, and customs that was systematised by the same priesthood.”⁶⁶ As Delamarre emphasises, the problem for Comte lies not in progressing from an industrial unity to a political unity of Europe, “it consists in perceiving that these two unities are equally inconsistent when they are made in the absence of the moral unity that only an independent and common spiritual authority can create and uphold.”⁶⁷

For Auguste Comte, the pope was right to describe his authority as “Catholic,” in the sense that it had a universal scope. In effect, “envisaged abstractly, the jurisdiction of spiritual authority, in its territorial area, has no other limits than that of the inhabitable globe ... since spiritual association is obviously susceptible by its nature to an indeterminate extension.”⁶⁸ The catholicity of Catholicism resided in its organisation, while by its absolute character Christian dogma denied this universality by condemning the followers of other beliefs.⁶⁹ Comte’s project was to sustain this structure of a universal doctrine, originating from the positive sciences, with the goal of establishing a spiritual association built on free consent. His purpose was to prepare the unification of the human race by a re-forging of the Western link. He thought that the European West would become a peaceful and regulated society if it were possible to obtain the voluntary union of Westerners in “the same moral communion,”⁷⁰ guaranteed by a general and generous authority.

⁶⁴ S, Appendix, 4: 195.

⁶⁵ S, Appendix, 4: 194.

⁶⁶ S, 3: 484.

⁶⁷ Cited article, p. 458.

⁶⁸ S, Appendix, 4: 194.

⁶⁹ See the 54th lesson of the *Cours de philosophie positive*: “The Catholic faith as a rigorous condition of eternal salvation ... inevitably leads to the damnation of all that is heterodox.” (Paris: Hermann, 1975), 2: 347. The same idea is to be found in S, 3: 460: “The damnation of non-believers... becomes necessary for consolidating the faith, a fundamental condition of every monotheistic constitution.”

⁷⁰ S, Appendix, 4: 195.

Conclusion

Joseph de Maistre and Auguste Comte both criticised the alleged spiritual unity at the origins of the Holy Alliance and they both affirmed the essential role of the “papal Revolution” and spiritual authority in Western history.⁷¹ The Savoyard diplomat sought to theorise the papacy in its relationship to the characteristics of European society. The ex-Polytechnic student’s theorization sought to free this notion from the historical and doctrinal context of the medieval West, to elevate it to the status of a transferable notion, susceptible to being applied to all societies and to all periods. These two thinkers held a similar notion of spiritual authority: to limit the material power without eliminating it and to found a European society, followed by a universal society based on the voluntary recognition of a scholarly, integrated, and educational authority.

⁷¹ This theory of spiritual power also implied Orientalism. For Maistre’s idea of the East and its impact in Russia, see, in this volume, Carolina Armenteros’ essay, “Preparing the Russian Revolution: Maistre and Uvarov on the History of Knowledge.”

PART III: MAISTRE'S GERMAN READERS



THE CORRESPONDENCE OF FREDERICK VON GENTZ:
THE RECEPTION OF *DU PAPE* IN THE
GERMAN-SPEAKING WORLD

Raphaël Cahen

Introduction¹

The study of the mutual connections and influences between Joseph de Maistre and Friedrich von Gentz² has never been the subject of a special study. Yet these two writers are recognised as being two of the greatest thinkers of the European Counter-revolution and a more detailed study of their relations would enable certain gaps to be filled in regarding the history of European conservative thought and European counter-revolutionary networks. However, Maistrian research has already taken an interest in the impact of Joseph de Maistre in the German-speaking world³ and studies involving the thought and life of Friedrich von

¹ This article was translated from French by Richard A. Lebrun.

² This article is the fruit of research in archives and libraries in diverse parts of Europe carried out over the course of my doctoral thesis, entitled “Friedrich von Gentz (1764–1832): penseur et acteur de la contre-révolution européenne.” This thesis is being undertaken under the co-tutelage of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and the Faculté de droit et de sciences politiques d’Aix-en-Provence. For this article, I must thank Michael Kohlhauer, Richard Lebrun and very especially Carolina Armenteros for their advice and support, as well as Herman Eschbach, who has always supported and assisted me during my various explorations in the immense Herterich Collection on Friedrich von Gentz to be found in the Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln.

³ Roland Schneider von Ramsen, “Joseph de Maistre: 1753–1821. Studien zu seiner Rezeption im deutschsprachigen Raum” (Mémoire de licence, Universität Freiburg i.Br., Fribourg-en-Brisgau, 1990), 331p. On the partial analysis of Maistre’s reception by Gentz, with limited sources, see 137–148. On the influence of Germany on Maistre and some aspects of Maistre’s acceptance in Germany, see Robert Triomphe, “Joseph de Maistre et l’Allemagne,” in *Joseph de Maistre: étude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d’un matérialiste mystique* (Geneva: Droz, 1968), 488–585. On K.J.H Windischmann and some aspects of Maistre’s reception in Germany, see Luigi Marino, “Joseph de Maistre in Germania: Carl Joseph Hieronymus Windischmann,” in *Joseph de Maistre tra illuminismo e restaurazione* (Turin: Studi piemontesi, 1974), 152–175. See also by the same author, *Joseph de Maistre e il romanticismo Tedesco* (Turin: Studi Piemontesi, 1972), 1, fasc. 2, 30–40.

Gentz⁴ have revealed the “knight of Europe’s”⁵ enthusiasm with respect to Joseph de Maistre’s work *Du pape* and the thought of the great Savoyard writer. Nevertheless, beyond Gentz’ acknowledged and henceforth well-known enthusiasm for Maistre, previous researchers have not sought to delve into the question of the intellectual relationship between Maistre and Gentz. For all that, it certainly appears that the acceptance of Maistre’s book *Du pape* (1819) in the German-speaking world though Friedrich von Gentz’s correspondence, part of which is unpublished,⁶ merits being analysed. In effect, such research not only permits studies on Maistre’s reception in the German-speaking world to be completed and shaped, increasing the precision with respect to the literary, political and ideological relations between the two great counter-revolutionary thinkers, but it also allows us to retrace ideological the political, philosophical and spiritual positions of he who was called ‘the Germanic’⁷ Burke’⁸ by his contemporaries, within the traditionalist counter-revolutionary and Romantic European networks during the period of the Restoration Congresses. Thus, the reconstitution of Friederick von Gentz’s reception of *Du pape* enables the debate to be reopened on Gentz’ relationship with traditionalist thought, as well as the ambiguous links with political theology and other religious and spiritual questions as a political actor in the forefront of the ‘era of Metternich.’⁹ Thus, the interpretation of Gentz’s reading of *Du pape*

⁴ Eugen Guglia, *Friedrich von Gentz: eine biographische Studie* (Vienna, 1901); Golo Mann, *Friedrich von Gentz. Gegenspieler Napoleons, Vordenker Europas* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), 346–7. Günther Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht, Friedrich Gentz als politischer Schriftsteller* (Berlin: Duncker and Humboldt, 1994), 80, n. 49, 90, and 186. In these studies, Gentz’s enthusiasm for Maistre’s *Du pape* is always mentioned, without being studied, commented on, or analysed.

⁵ See Schmidt-Weissenfels, *Friedrich Gentz: Eine Biographie* (2 vols. Prague: Rober and Martgraf, 1859), 2: 70. The expression “knight of Europe” was given to Gentz by Tsar Alexander I (reigned 1801–25) in an 1814 *ukaze*.

⁶ Bonald’s letters to Gentz and Gentz’s letters to Haller as well as other letters and archival documents used for the purposes of this article are unpublished. As for Gentz’s published letters to Metternich, Pilat, and Müller, they have not yet been subjected to a simultaneous study concerning the acceptance of Maistre’s by Gentz.

⁷ Otto Karmin, “Lettres inédites de Frédéric Gentz à Sir Francis d’Ivernois (1798–1803),” *Revue historique de la révolution française et de l’empire*, 4 (1913): 5–44.

⁸ Edmund Burke (1729–97). On the thought of the great Irish writer in France, see the indispensable work by Michel Ganzin, *La pensée politique d’Edmund Burke* (Paris: LGDJ, 1972).

⁹ On Gentz’s relationship to Metternich, see Heinrich Ritter von Srbik, *Metternich. Der Staatsmann und der Mensch*, 3 vols. (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1957), vol. 1; Günther Kronenbitter, “Friedrich von Gentz und Metternich,” in Robert Hill, Ulrich E. Zellenberg, *Konservatismus in Österreich. Strömungen, Ideen, Personen und Vereinigungen von den*

highlights the importance of his spirituality and raises the question of his acceptance of Maistre's principal thesis, namely the infallibility of the popes and their sovereignty with respect to European princes. Moreover, the relations and mutual influences between Gentz and Maistre and to a larger extent, between the German-speaking counter-revolutionary networks and traditionalist and Catholic counter-revolutionary thinkers equally deserves to be specified and analysed, notably Gentz's role¹⁰ in them particularly given that they appear to have been much more developed and complex than has been claimed to date. It also appears very important to put Gentz's reception of Maistre's work back into the historical context 1) following the Congress of Vienna and the Holy Alliance of 1815, as well as 2) within the Gentz system¹¹ of European political stability and equilibrium, in order to grasp both the political and spiritual impact on the latter as well as on the German-speaking counter-revolutionary circles.

Friedrich von Gentz: A Political, Intellectual, and Spiritual Path

Friedrich von Gentz¹² was one of the most influential political personalities of the Metternich era and one of the most difficult European counter-revolutionary figures to interpret.¹³ Especially known for his translation of Edmund Burke's famous *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1791), for his role as Metternich's private secretary and the

Anfangen bis heute (Stuttgart: Graz, 1999), 71–87. On Metternich, Srbik's monumental work remains essential reading. In French, see especially the recently published work by Charles Zorgbibe, *Metternich, le séducteur diplomate* (Paris: Editions de Fallois, 2009).

¹⁰ Gentz's relationship to Louis de Bonald has equally never been the subject of a detailed and specific study.

¹¹ The first person to speak of a "Gentz system" rather than a "Metternich system" was Heinrich Ritter von Srbik. See his *Metternich. Der Staatsmann und der Mensch*, I: 344. On the implementation of the system and Gentz's political and diplomatic work, see Barbara Dorn, "Friedrich von Gentz und Europa: Studien zu Stabilität und Revolution 1802–1822" (Ph.D. dissertation, Bonn, 1993).

¹² On the biography of Friedrich Gentz (1764–1832), see Golo Mann, *Friedrich von Gentz*, 787–93; Paul Sweet, *Friedrich Gentz defender of the old order* (Madison, 1941, reprinted in Westport, CN by Greenwood Press, 1970); Jakob Baxa, *Friedrich von Gentz* (Vienna, 1965).

¹³ Helmut Rumpel, "Justicia Renorum fundamentum": *Friedrich von Gentz und die Idee des Rechts in der internationalen Politik*, in *Hanak Peter Festschrift* (Budapest, 1991), 143; Werner Goldschmidt, "Friedrich von Gentz vom aufgeklärten Menschenfreund zum Ultrapraktiker im Kampf gegen die Revolution," in Arno Herzig, Inge Stehan, Hans G. Winter, *Sie und Nicht wir*, 2 vols. (Hamburg, 1989), 2: 439–440.

editor in chief of all the European Congresses of the Restoration, he was equally and above all one of the most influential counter-revolutionary writers.¹⁴ Considered as a member of the movement of 'conservative reformers',¹⁵ the question of his belonging to political romanticism¹⁶ was suggested before being abandoned.¹⁷ In any case, Gentz's political ideas evolved, oscillating between periods of more conservative and more liberal orientations.¹⁸ Equally, they are far from being devoid of all contradiction,¹⁹ especially concerning his relation with political theology and religion.

¹⁴ See Gentz's private diaries in Friedrich Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12 volumes in 24 sub-volumes (Hildesheim, Zurich, New York, 1997–2004). See especially vol. 12, *Tagebücher*. Also see his unpublished correspondence in the Herterich Collection, Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln and the opinions of his contemporaries as reflected by Talleyrand, Metternich, Varnhagen von Ense, Tsar Alexandre, Canning, etc.

¹⁵ Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht*, 80–94; Henning Ottmann, *Geschichte des politischen Denkens: Die Neuzeit*, 7 vols. (Stuttgart: Weimar, 2001–8), 3: 3 and 15–20.

¹⁶ Eugen Guglia, *Gentz*, 56–128, Robinet de Cléry, *Les idées politiques de Friedrich Gentz* (Lausanne, 1917), 56–113, 267–281. Alfred Gerhardt, *Romantische Elemente in der Politik und Staatsanschauung Friedrich Gentz*, thesis, (Leipzig, 1907). Luc Ferry, "La naissance de la pensée contre-révolutionnaire en Allemagne: Gentz et Jacobi," in *La révolution française au Canada français*, acts of a colloquium held at the University of Ottawa, 15–17 November 1989, under the direction of Sylvain Simard, 389. Ferry speaks of the "complexity of his relationship to romanticism and of a "rallying to romanticism before 1819, if there ever was a complete rallying (which remains difficult to say)." Similarly, Alain Renault, "Entre lumières et romantisme. L'exemple de Gentz," in *Histoire de la philosophie politique, lumières et romantisme* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1999), 253–272, who repeats exactly word for word the theses of his friend Luc Ferry. It is to be noted that in his argument, Alain Renault attributes the *Darstellung des Fürstenbundes* of 1787 to Adam Müller, confusing him with Johannes von Müller (*sic!*).

¹⁷ Carl Schmidt, *Politische Romantik* (Berlin, 1968, 3rd ed.), 24–36; Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht*, 88–92. Kronenbitter, "Deutsche Romantik und österreichische Aussenpolitik 1806 bis 1829," in *Paradoxien der Romantik* (Vienna, 2006); Ottmann, *Geschichte des politischen Denkens*, 15–20.

¹⁸ The question of his last reversal of opinion in 1830 was posed after the publication of his correspondence with Wessenberg, (Gentz und Wessenberg, *Briefe des Ersten an den Zweiten Mitgeteilt von August Fournier* (Vienna and Leipzig, 1907)), and still remains open despite the affirmations of Golo Mann, Paul Sweet, and Kronenbitter, in the works already cited, that it does not represent a return to the 'liberalism' of his youth. None of these authors having really provided proof on this matter, to my eyes it remains questionable. Also to be noted is Barbara Dorn's thesis, "Friedrich von Gentz und Europa," which underlines Gentz's 'liberalism' from 1815 to 1818.

¹⁹ Especially with respect to this position on freedom of the press. In 1797, in his famous letter to the king (*Seiner königlichen Majestät Friedrich Wilhelm dem Dritten bei der Thronbesteigung allerunterthänigst überreicht*, 16 November 1797), on the model of Mirabeau, he asked for unlimited freedom of the press. In 1819, he was one of the authors of the Carlsbad Decrees and he expressed himself in his article on freedom of the press in England (published in England under the title *Reflections on the Liberty of the Press in Great Britain* (London, 1820) arguing for limited freedom controlled by

The future “knight of Europe” was born in Breslau in 1764 to a Huguenot mother and a Lutheran father. He became a civil servant in the Prussian administration in Berlin from 1785 and made a name for himself in 1793, with his translation of Burke’s “Reflections on the Revolution in France” (1790), accompanied by notes and personal studies. Converted to the counter-revolutionary cause, he undertook a literary career specifically by publishing other translations accompanied with studies and notes by major counter-revolutionary thinkers, in the image of his translation of Mallet du Pan’s²⁰ *Considérations sur la nature de la révolution de France* (1793) and Mounier’s *Recherches sur les causes qui ont empêché les Français de devenir libres* (1792),²¹ simultaneously pursuing his work as a civil servant. The publication of his *Historisches Journal* in 1799–1800 earned him European and world-wide fame. An *émigré* in Vienna since 1802, he was one of Napoleon’s fiercest enemies, thanks to his publicist air and his extensive political relations with European monarchs. Constrained to exile from 1805 to 1809, he lived between Teplice, Dresden, Prague, Budapest and Vienna before settling permanently in the capital of the Austrian Empire in 1812 as Metternich’s personal secretary.

From a spiritual point of view, Gentz never converted to Catholicism; despite many attempts by his friends, he remained Prussian and Lutheran.²² Thus attempts to convert him by his friend and ‘pupil’ Adam Müller,²³ who himself converted to Catholicism in 1805, started

censorship. In 1831, in his correspondence with his friend Prokesch Osten, the latter asks him to justify his 1819 position in relation to that of 1797 and Gentz seems to regret his 1819 position. See the unpublished letters from Gentz to Prokeschen Osten in the Herterich Collection, Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln.

²⁰ Jacques Mallet du Pan (1749–1800), the famous Swiss journalist, editor of the *Mercure de France* and of the *Mercure britannique*, which inspired Gentz for his *Historisches Journal*, was equally close to Joseph de Maistre and one of the *monarchiens* during the French revolution. See Frances Dorothy Acomb, *Mallet du Pan: A career in Political Journalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1973).

²¹ Jean Joseph Mounier (1749–1806). On this famous *monarchien*, see René Bourgeois, *Jean Joseph Mounier: un oublié de la révolution* (Grenoble: Presses universitaires de Grenoble, 1998). Bourgeois has recently published part of an unpublished letter Mounier sent to Gentz in 1798. This letter comes from the Fonds Mounier of the Sächsische Landesbibliothek Dresden and has appeared in Bulletin 56 (February 2009), of the Frankreich-Zentrum of the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität de Fribourg in Brisgau.

²² See the article by Hubert Rumpel, “Friedrich Gentz: die Bestimmung seiner Konfessionszugehörigkeit als methodisches Problem,” in *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel und Ost Deutschland*, 16–17, (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1968). In 1806, Gentz also read the Bible regularly. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:1:46.

²³ Adam Müller (1779–1829) was one of the most active members of political romanticism in Europe. On Adam Müller’s thought, see especially the writings of

in the years 1804–05²⁴ and were renewed in 1811,²⁵ though they remained unfruitful. Likewise, further attempts made in 1819 by Friedrich Schlegel,²⁶ converted in 1808 and with whom Gentz had intense relations since 1811,²⁷ and by Joseph von Pilat,²⁸ a convert and militant Catholic, equally failed.²⁹ Despite all this, although he never underwent an official conversion, in the eyes of his friends he expressed very strong leanings towards Catholicism, the more so given that he was never a practicing Protestant and that from 1804, in his correspondence with Johannes von Müller,³⁰ he considered the Protestant Reformation as one of the sources of the destruction of European unity.³¹ On the other hand, despite his involvement with Viennese Romantic circles, at least until at least 1818 he continually affirmed his independence of mind with respect to the Catholic reaction of 1813 and his aversion for the Ultras.³²

Jakob Baxa: *Adam Müllers Philosophie, Ästhetik und Staatswissenschaft* (Berlin, 1929); *Ein Lebensbild aus den Befreiungskriegen und aus der deutschen Restauration* (Jena, 1930); 'Romantik und konservative Politik', in G.K. Kaltenbrunner (Hrsg.), *Rekonstruktion des Konservatismus* (Freiburg, 1972), 443–68. On the very close relations between Müller and Gentz, see Kronenbitter, "Deutsche Romantik und österreichische Aussenpolitik 1806 bis 1829," 186–201 and especially the crucial collection of Adam Müller's correspondence: Jakob Baxa, *Adam Müller: Lebenszeugnisse* (Vienna, 1966).

²⁴ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:1:38–9.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12:1:256 and Baxa, *Lebenszeugnisse*, 1: 669. "The religious question was very often strongly emphasised between us. And since I had not been able to make the official decision to convert to Catholicism, despite my strong leaning in this direction, it had become more evident to me that I would never do it."

²⁶ Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829). The literature on this central figure of German political romanticism is more than abundant.

²⁷ See Friedrich Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12: 1-2-3-4. Friedrich Schlegel was Gentz's principal collaborator with Joseph Pilat in the *Observateur autrichien* since its creation in 1811.

²⁸ On Joseph von Pilat (1782–1865), Gentz's friend and collaborator in the *Observateur autrichien*, see Wolfgang Zechner, "Joseph von Pilat" (Thesis, Vienna, 1954).

²⁹ See Pilat's letter to Schlegel of March to May 1819, in *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, die Epoche der Zeitschrift Concordia* (6th November 1818–May 1823), ed. Eugène Susini (Paderborn, Munich, Vienna, 1980).

³⁰ Johannes von Müller (1752–1809). Religious questions were recurrent in the correspondence between Gentz and Johannes von Müller. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, 4, pp. 44–8. Müller considered Gentz a deist. He also thought that Gentz would eventually take a less distant position on religion and Protestantism. Gentz replied to him that on religious questions there was still much to discuss between them.

³¹ Friedrich Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8: 4, *Briefe von Gentz an Johannes von Müller*, 19–43. On 14 November 1804, Gentz spoke of "his considerable aversion for the Reformation."

³² On Gentz's opposition to the Ultras in France, see especially B. Dorn's explanations, "Friedrich von Gentz," 189–209.

Politically, Gentz was disappointed by the Congress of Vienna,³³ notably because of its implications for the European program of peace and equilibrium. Being particularly politically clear-headed in his judgments, Gentz, was perfectly aware that the Congress powers were more concerned with partitioning the European territories conquered by Napoleon than with working to found an international system for maintaining the peace.³⁴ In 1815, on the occasion of the Congress of Paris, he sought to minimise the war indemnities demanded of France insofar as possible, in accordance with his ideas of European equilibrium. Upon his return to Vienna, he experienced a long period of political isolation³⁵ before becoming an indispensable player during the period of the Congress, the Concert of Europe and the Holy Alliance.³⁶ Intellectually, before the Congress period, although he occupied himself with public finance matters,³⁷ German and French internal politics and the "Oriental question,"³⁸ his main concern was certainly Europe and the establishment of a durable system of peace.³⁹ During this period, he was also very favourable to the internal reform policies of various European administrations, defending positions that were very far

³³ Gentz, Friedrich, *Mémoire du 12 Février 1815*, in *Metternich's nachgelassene Papiere*, 2: 473–502.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Metternich no longer replied to Gentz's letters and he sank into a black depression on his return from Paris. Fournier, *Gentz und Wessenberg*, 96–110.

³⁶ Gentz was critical of the mystically fervent pact of the Holy Alliance drafted by Tsar Alexander. See especially "Ueber den Beitritt zum heiligen Bunde," in Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8: 3, 20–23.

³⁷ This is the case even though it may be an aspect of Gentz's that, unjustly, is very poorly studied. He was a particularly great specialist in finance and an economic thinker. It was in fact for his talents in public finance that he was hired by Austria in 1802. On Gentz's financial policy in Austria from 1811 to 1817, see Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht*, 241–56.

³⁸ Since 1812 he had been the correspondent of the Hospodars of Wallachia and he took a keen interest in Oriental questions from 1812 to his death in 1832. See Comte de Prokesch Osten (Fils), *Dépêches inédites aux hospodars de la Valachie. Pour servir à l'histoire de la politique européenne (1813 à 1828)*, 3 vols (Paris, 1876), and the Fonds Gentz in the Otto Wolff Collection, Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln, which is overflowing with notebooks concerning Gentz's keen interest in the "Oriental question."

³⁹ On Gentz's constant desire in favour of peace in Europe, it is interesting to note that on the occasion of an epistle dedicated to him in 1806, the future Louis-Philippe d'Orléans, who was close to Gentz before becoming king, nicknamed the Prussian publicist *Cyneas*, in reference to the counsellor of Pyrrhus, who had busied himself for the sake of peace and tried to prevent the disastrous war against the Romans led by his king. See *Lettres de Louis-Philippe d'Orléans à Frédéric Gentz*, Archives de la maison de France, AP (300) III, 16, 42, Archives nationales, Paris.

removed from those defended by Adam Müller and Joseph von Pilat.⁴⁰ At the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle, which permitted the reintegration of France into the Concert of great powers, Gentz saw himself as a European in the service of the great powers and peace⁴¹ and his work was rewarded with Prussian, Russian, and Austrian decorations. Nevertheless, the “secretary of Europe”⁴² was clear about the dangers that lay in wait for Europe and even before the assassination of Kotzebue,⁴³ he seemed more than sceptical about the solidity of the European peace system. Moreover, this system was subjected to strong criticisms from the famous Abbé de Pradt.⁴⁴ This obliged Gentz to develop and elucidate upon his new ideas with respect to the European system of political balance,⁴⁵ in his first essay against de Pradt.⁴⁶

Thus, the sceptical tendencies of his soul as well as the growing political opposition to his system of European peace once again directed the knight of Europe towards the spiritual field. In March 1819, he exclaimed in these ‘mystical’ terms: “God has not yet consented to the definitive destruction of the old social order.”⁴⁷ Gentz was again pushed towards spirituality and religion in his political thinking, especially since he was under a strong religious influence due to his relations with Adam Müller,⁴⁸ Joseph von Pilat and Friedrich Schlegel.⁴⁹ At the same time his correspondence with Metternich⁵⁰ was principally oriented towards religious questions, especially since Metternich found himself

⁴⁰ Dorn, “Gentz,” 209.

⁴¹ “As a man who belonged to no particular cabinet, but, so to speak, to Europe,” Gentz to Caradja, 25 December 1818, Fonds Gentz, 4, 245, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna.

⁴² Golo Mann, *Gentz*, 399. And Golo Mann, “Friedrich von Gentz, der Sekretär Europas,” *Die Wandlung*, 1^{re} année, numéro 9 (September 1946), 787–93.

⁴³ Marking the most conservative tendencies of Metternich’s policy.

⁴⁴ On the abbé de Pradt (1759–1837), see the unpublished thesis by Claire Lejeune, “L’abbé de Pradt” (Thèse de doctorat d’histoire, Paris, 1996).

⁴⁵ Günther Kronenbitter, “Friedenserklärung. Gleichgewicht und Konsens in den internationalen Beziehungen in Europa um 1815,” in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte* (2009).

⁴⁶ *Ueber de Pradt’s Gemälde von Europa nach dem Kongress von Aachen*, 1819; *Wiener Jahrbüchern der Literatur*, in Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, 3, 88–156.

⁴⁷ Gentz to Soutzo, 17 March 1819, Fonds Gentz, 12, 278, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna.

⁴⁸ He was also rereading Adam Müller’s writings. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12: 2, 316–44 and Adam Müller, *Lebenszeugnisse*.

⁴⁹ Schlegel himself also provided a connection to Maistre. See, in this volume, Adrian Daub, “‘All Evil is the Cancellation of Unity’: Joseph de Maistre and Late German Romanticism” and Carolina Armenteros, “Preparing the Russian Revolution: Maistre and Uvarov on the History of Knowledge.”

⁵⁰ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 1:11:3–4.

in Rome with the Emperor visiting the pope. On this occasion, the new opening towards spirituality was combined with a more conservative orientation in Gentz's reading in accordance with a hardening of Metternich's policy. Thus, like Metternich, the knight of Europe set out to read the journal *Le Conservateur*, a mouthpiece of the Ultras that they rejected in 1814. So, on 19 April 1819, Gentz noted in his private diary: "An article in *Le Conservateur* (by the Abbé de La Mennais⁵¹) has led me to develop a series of profound and important thoughts on the relations between the church and the state."⁵² The political conjecture was no longer the same in 1819; the Ultras' press seemed to respond better to the expectations of Metternich and Gentz to preserve European order and equilibrium and was more in agreement with the Holy Alliance that France had joined in 1818.

Despite this, spiritually speaking, Gentz kept his distance from Catholic thinkers on religious questions. Thus, in a letter to Metternich, sent on 3 June 1819, to which he attached extracts from one of Adam Müller's letters, Gentz expressed his concern for the rise of religious mysticism, noting that it was not by "religious fantasies that political errors could be settled."⁵³ Gentz's position was still ambivalent, even though he expressed his protest in mystical terms and invoked God as he had done in 1806 in the face of Napoleon, in 1819 Gentz did not fully assign religion a practical role in politics. Nevertheless, religious and European matters appeared to concern Gentz more than ever in this critical year and to him, a greater opening towards political theology seemed more possible than in previous periods.

Gentz, Bonald and Francophone Literary and Political Circles

Before he read Joseph de Maistre's *Du pape* in October 1820, Gentz's introduction to theology and particularly Catholicism and to the more

⁵¹ On Lamennais (1782–1854), see Frédéric Lambert, *Théologie de la République: Lamennais, prophète et législateur*, préface de René Rémond, (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001). On his relationship with Germany, see L. Ahrens, *Lamennais und Deutschland. Studien zur Geschichte der Französischen Restauration* (Münster, 1930) and G. Valerius, *Deutscher Katholizismus und Lamennais: die Auseinandersetzung in der katholischen publizistik (1817–1854)* (Mainz, Grünewald, 1983). Gentz continued to read the writings of Lamennais at least until 1829. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12: 5, 35ff. He also encouraged Count Pralormo to read Lamennais. See Count Pralormo's letter to Gentz from Vienna, 17 March 1829, in the Herterich Collection.

⁵² Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12: 2, 319.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11:3:435.

conservative authors who emerged after the Congress of Aix-la-Chapelle was intensified by the relations that he wove with the French Ultras who agreed with Metternich's policy. Even before the Congress of Carlsbad, he was intensely interested in the European-wide press and its control. Given his skills and long experience as a publicist, Gentz was one of the key figures in putting press-related policy into practice.⁵⁴ It is in this quite particular political context that Gentz broached a comparison between Francophone literary, and intellectual, Catholic and 'legitimist' circles, which foreshadowed and prepared his evolution on questions of theology and his cheerful reception of Maistre's book.

On 30 June 1819, Gentz sent a letter to Louis de Bonald,⁵⁵ to which he enclosed his "anti de Pradt," thus initiating a political and literary correspondence⁵⁶ with the viscount under the auspices of Metternich, who was immediately informed of Gentz's initiative.⁵⁷ Bonald was far from a stranger to the knight of Europe. Gentz had read Bonald's brochures in 1815⁵⁸ before his stay in Paris as well as Bonald's "anti-Staël"⁵⁹ in 1818.⁶⁰ In his first letter to the viscount, Gentz immediately indicated to Bonald how *Le Conservateur*⁶¹ could be improved and rendered more compatible with European interests.⁶² Bonald did not take long to reply.

⁵⁴ Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht*, 156–202.

⁵⁵ On Louis de Bonald (1754–1840), see Jacques Alibert, *Les triangles d'or d'une société catholique: Louis de Bonald, théoricien de la contre-révolution* (Paris: Pierre Téqui, 2002).

⁵⁶ Besides the letters that we subsequently cite, Louis de Bonald wrote to Gentz on 22 June and 23 December 1821 (in German), 4 April, 22 May and 15 October. See the Herterich Collection. Friedrich von Gentz's letters to Bonald are apparently not to be found in the Bonald archives at Millau in Aveyron. This was pointed out to me by Louis de Bonald's great-grandson, who checked his ancestor's archives for me. I thank him very much for the time that he so willingly devoted to my request. Moreover, at least until 1819, Gentz continued to read Bonald's writings. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12: 5, 34. He also translated some of Bonald's speeches for the *Observateur autrichien*. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12: 3, 19–23, 32.

⁵⁷ Gentz to Metternich, 1 July 1819, in Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 11: 3, 478.

⁵⁸ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:1:353.

⁵⁹ Louis de Bonald, *Observations sur l'ouvrage de Madame la baronne de Staël: Considérations sur les principaux événements de la révolution française* (Paris: Leclerc, 1818). See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:2:286.

⁶⁰ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:1:353; 2:286.

⁶¹ On the intensive discussion between Gentz and Metternich regarding the journal *Le Conservateur* from April to August 1819, see Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 11:3:420, 424, 445, 472, 478.

⁶² An extract from Gentz's letter to Bonald dated 30 June 1819 transmitted to Metternich: "After some completely sublime pieces, where one breathes the air of a region far above little party squabbles, it is with a painful feeling that one suddenly finds oneself in the midst of the frenzy of the battlefield. What I desire is perhaps

He replied to Gentz with two letters, dated 14 and 22 July 1819.⁶³ In the first, Bonald assured Gentz that his principles converged with his own. He equally congratulated him for having “been able to merit the esteem and approval of Gentz, Maistre and Haller⁶⁴ and of other good French and foreign minds, worthy leaders of this honourable league among all the defenders of the most holy of causes.”⁶⁵ At the same time, Gentz intensified his reading of Lamennais and plunged into the *Essai sur l’indifférence en matière de religion* (4 vols., 1817–24).⁶⁶ Gentz and Metternich had thus found in Bonald a defender of their ‘European’ policy, an active member of the Holy Alliance or rather of this “holy league” or “European league,” as Gentz defined the bond uniting the different European powers after 1815.⁶⁷ In turn, Bonald had found in Gentz one of the advocates of his ideas in Germany, as he reported to Haller:

“our hope for the progress of sane doctrine in the German countries has been given to me by the famous diplomat M. de Gentz, who in honouring my principles and my actions ... our *Conservateur* has done a great good for humanity.... How can governments that one assumes to be composed of enlightened and able men fail to see what you and I see and, in a less advantageous portion, what M. de Maistre, M. de Gentz and so many others see?”⁶⁸

The relations between Bonald, Gentz and Haller were thus strengthened. After the Congress of Carlsbad and the adoption of restrictive

impossible, but if *Le conservateur* could limit itself to these articles of superior and permanent interest, to which it owes the greater part of its success, it is difficult to estimate the influence this journal could have on opinion not only in France, but in Europe, which nevertheless has done an infinity of good...” in Gentz *Gesammelte Schriften*, 11: 3:478.

⁶³ Bonald judged Gentz’s book against Pradt very favourably. He even joked to Gentz: “we are unfortunate to have minds of this kind and that of Mme de Staël, which would have made a good marriage with the abbé de Pradt; and into this community the two spouses would have brought a rich content of bad thoughts... these are great false minds as Bossuet calls them.” See Bonald’s letter to Gentz, 22 July 1819, Herterich Collection.

⁶⁴ Karl Ludwig von Haller (1768–1854) was a radical conservative. See Ronald Roggen “‘Restauration’—Kampf und Schimpfwort: eine Kommunikationsanalyse zum Hauptwerk des Staatstheoretikers Karl Ludwig von Haller (1768–1854)” (Dissertation, Fribourg, 1999).

⁶⁵ Louis de Bonald to Friedrich von Gentz, Paris, 14 July 1819, unpublished letter, Herterich Collection.

⁶⁶ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12: 2, 3 July, 15 July 1819, 336, 340.

⁶⁷ See Gentz’s letters to Stewart, in Fonds Gentz, NLG12, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Vienna.

⁶⁸ Bonald to Haller, 11 August 1819, certified copy in Herterich Collection, original to be found in the Fonds Haller, Archives de l’état de Fribourg.

measures on freedom of the press and the universities by the Allies, Bonald renewed his support of Gentz in a new letter and stated:

It is undoubtedly to you, that Europe owes the drafting of the memorable decrees of the Congress of Carlsbad. I thought I recognised there your noble and energetic style and I definitely found your sentiments there ... you have given the civilised world the greatest example and the most elevated lesson that it can receive [...] it is certainly an imperial function that your illustrious sovereign has fulfilled.⁶⁹

It is almost certainly within the context of Bonald's support for the European policy led by Gentz that the knight of Europe heard about Maistre's work on the power of the popes for the first time. In effect, in a new letter sent from Paris on 28 January 1820, containing another eulogy for Austria and Metternich's policy, Bonald exclaimed:

We have here the work of my illustrious friend Count de Maistre entitled *Du pape*. It is very ultramontane, which does not please our bishops, who make a great fuss about the freedom of our church to reduce it to servitude. However setting aside this question that is more national than personal and that would find many partisans even in France, there are some very fine things in this writing. The author has sent it to me, but I have not yet been able to read it and I am only speaking by hearsay!⁷⁰

Thus in January 1820 Gentz not only knew of the existence of *Du pape* but he had initiated a political alliance with French counter-revolutionary monarchist, Catholic, and legitimist circles. Additionally, Gentz's policy of ideological and literary connections in France was not limited to Bonald,⁷¹ especially following the period of the Congresses. Like Bonald, Gentz was also close to the Count de Senfft⁷² who was living in Paris and hoped to found in the city "a centre of connections dedicated to coordinating the actions of Catholic publicists in all

⁶⁹ Louis de Bonald to Friedrich Gentz, Millau (near Avignon), 14 October 1819, unpublished letter, Sig. Darmstaedter 2d 1790, Handschriftabteilung der Staatsbibliothek Berlin.

⁷⁰ Louis de Bonald to Friedrich Gentz, Paris, 28 January 1820, unpublished letter, Cotta Ver. Autogr., *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach*, *Cotta-Archiv* (Stiftung der Stuttgarter Zeitung).

⁷¹ A specific study on the relations between Gentz and French literary milieus between 1815 and 1832 remains to be written, his relations with France having been underestimated by scholars. Nevertheless these relations were intense, which has already been pointed out by the first biography published on Gentz, in *La biographie des hommes vivants* by Louis Gabriel Michaud (Paris, 1817).

⁷² Friedrich Christian Ludwig Senfft von Pilsach (1774–1853). See Gentz's letters to the Count de Senfft in the Herterich Collection.

parts of Europe and even America.”⁷³ Without himself being Catholic, Gentz was among the coveted publicists and in 1821–23 his position drew closer to that of Achilles de Jouffroy,⁷⁴ Jean Claude Claussel de Coussergues,⁷⁵ a friend of Bonald, as well as Raoul Rochette⁷⁶ and Chateaubriand.⁷⁷ Gentz pursued his relationship with these networks, notably Bonald and Chateaubriand, until at least 1829.⁷⁸ And his reading of *Du pape* accentuated his policy of supporting Catholic and counter-revolutionary writers.

Gentz's Reading of Joseph de Maistre's *Du pape*

So it was Bonald who first informed Gentz of the publication of Maistre's *Du pape*. However to reconstruct Gentz's reading of Maistre, it is necessary to turn to Gentz's private diary,⁷⁹ as well as his correspondence

⁷³ See the project of Lamennais and Senfft reported by Jean René Derré, *En marge de la Sainte Alliance: Lettres de Bonald au comte de Senfft* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1967), 19 and 27.

⁷⁴ On Achilles de Jouffroy (1785–1859), author of *Fastes de l'anarchie ou précis chronologique des évènements mémorables de la révolution française depuis 1789 jusqu'en 1804* and a collaborator of many of the journals Gentz regularly read from 1821 to 1823, see Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:2:403–405, 407–416, 465, 477, 487 and 3: 83–6, 97, 99–104, 106, 108–118.

⁷⁵ Jean Claude Clausel de Coussergues (1759–1846), friend of Bonald. Deputy from Aveyron to the Chambre des députés (1815–20, 1821–30), sent his *Quelques considérations sur la révolution d'Espagne* to Gentz on 1 September 1822. See Coussergues' letter to Gentz in the Herterich Collection.

⁷⁶ Raoul Rochette (1790–1854), a Member of the Institut royal de France, sent his *Histoire de la révolution helvétique* to Gentz in homage to “the honourable and just consideration that M. de Genz has established for himself by so much effort and so much work, next to those who, near or far, had worked for the restoration of public order in Europe.” See Rochette's letter to Gentz, 8 July 1823, in the Herterich Collection.

⁷⁷ See an extract of the correspondence between Chateaubriand and Gentz in Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, 1, pp. 362–368. Gentz had begun to translate *Le génie du Christianisme* as early as 1802. He saw the book as a “masterpiece of eloquence” and he made the author's personal acquaintance in October 1822 at the Congress of Verona. Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. 8, pp. 96–98, 108–109, 112, 115, 120. See NFG (GSA) Weimar 05/25 and Gentz to Frölich, cited by Kronenbitter, *Gentz*, 116. Gentz was nevertheless critical enough of Chateaubriand and the *Journal des débats* in his letters to Metternich. Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 11:4:60–61, 72, 80, 84–85, 129, 223–4, 261–5.

⁷⁸ In 1830 and 1831, Gentz again started reading and also translating Chateaubriand. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:5:200, 276, 332–3.

⁷⁹ The year 1820 is missing from Gentz's private diary, which is most regrettable, especially for obtaining a better idea of what was happening in Gentz's mind at the time he was reading Maistre.

and relations with Adam Müller and Joseph von Pilat. At the time when Gentz was preparing to read Maistre, his friendship with Adam Müller once again became more apparent in his life,⁸⁰ his correspondence,⁸¹ and his thought.⁸² Before Müller encouraged Gentz to read Maistre's *Du pape*, the latter was evidently no stranger to Gentz.⁸³ He had met the Count before his long stay in Russia. On 20 April 1803, Gentz wrote in his private diary: "I dined at Paget's with the famous Count Maistre who was travelling from Turin to St. Petersburg."⁸⁴ What reciprocal effect did this unique⁸⁵ meeting have on the two great theoreticians of the Counter-revolution? Only Gentz's rewritten diary⁸⁶ can give us some answers:

The fact that I had seen this great man had totally disappeared from my memory. Therefore he had only made a small impression on me. How is this possible? Should I not have had a much higher opinion of the writer of the *Considérations sur la Révolution* (sic)? Was I too pampered by living every day in the midst of Great Men? Or too saturated by diplomatic bullshit? I don't know.⁸⁷

In 1826, Gentz no longer even remembered his meeting with Maistre. Nevertheless, the meeting with Count de Maistre was surely not insignificant for Gentz, especially since he had read the *Considérations sur la France* (1797) before meeting the famous Savoyard. Besides, *Considérations* and thus Maistre himself could have influenced Gentz before his reading of *Du Pape*. Thus, during his years of exile after the taking of Vienna by Napoleon and the Battle of Austerlitz, Gentz picked

⁸⁰ In July he had breakfast every morning with Adam Müller until the arrival of the latter's wife and then he dined every evening with his friend. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:2:346–7.

⁸¹ Especially in his correspondence with Metternich, Müller became a major subject of conversation.

⁸² On 9 December 1819, Gentz read Müller's *Nécessité de la théologie* to take a break from the Discourse of the king of France, which he translated for the *Österreichischer Beobachter*. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:2:373.

⁸³ It would be interesting to confirm whether Gentz had read Maistre well before 1803, even if it is true that the sources available for ascertaining if Gentz's reading of Maistre took place during his time in Berlin from his translation of Burke (1793) to his departure for Vienna (1802) are much less numerous than those available for the period of *Du pape*'s appearance. The rewritten private diary only begins in 1800 and the correspondence available is much less abundant for the period before 1802. In any case, Maistre is never cited in Gentz's political writings or correspondence until 1802.

⁸⁴ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:1:27–8. Gentz at this time also saw Karl Ludwig von Haller regularly, then in Vienna.

⁸⁵ As far as we know, there was never another meeting between Maistre and Gentz.

⁸⁶ In 1826.

⁸⁷ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:1:27–8

up, in letters sent to Countess Dolgorukow⁸⁸ or Monsignor de La Fare,⁸⁹ the eschatological horizon of history and the sacredness of war and of the executioner such as they appeared in Maistre's work on the French Revolution. In effect, the exiled publicist thought "that there is no hope other than that of the mercy of God for I see well that the means and strengths of men have come to an end,"⁹⁰ before "[prostrating] himself before eternal justice,"⁹¹ and pointing out that "a generation that has been able to witness dry eyed the first six years of the Revolution in France without washing itself completely merited death." For him "[i]t is the blood of innumerable victims, sacrificed by this infernal revolution. It is the blood of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette, the cut throats of priests of the altar, a million innocent people massacred who today cry for vengeance on Europe." Finally, it is "God who has endowed the one that he has chosen as the instrument of his justice all the means and all the talents necessary for his destruction."⁹² However the bloody and sacred tones that appear in this letter are very rarely found in Gentz's writings outside this particular period in the life of the great German publicist and the sources at our disposal do not allow us to clarify whether these 'Maistrian' strokes by Gentz had really been provoked by a reading or a re-reading of Maistre's *Considérations*. On the other hand, however, the two thinkers were politically very close to one another in the years 1804–05. They preached similar ideas on the state of Europe,⁹³ especially with respect to the means for re-establishing

⁸⁸ Ekaterine Fedorovne Dolgorukowa (1769–1849) was married to Wassili Wassilievitch Dolgorukow (1752–1812), who belonged to one of the most influential families in the Russian empire.

⁸⁹ On this indispensable collaborator of Louis XVIII, see the excellent work by Bernard de Brie, *Consciences épiscopales en exil (1789–1814) à travers la correspondance de Mgr de La Fare, évêque de Nancy* (Paris: Cerf, 2004).

⁹⁰ Unpublished letter to the Countess Dolgorukowa, dated 4 December 1805. See Bibliothèque nationale de Russie, Moscow, written documents F 608 Pomjalowski, in the Herterich Collection.

⁹¹ In another unpublished letter to Countess Dolgorukowa, dated 25 August 1806, he expressed himself in these terms: "our contemporaries have received what they have deserved... Eternal justice, as respectable in its punishments as in its favours, had given to this cowardly generation an example that will perhaps not be lost on those who come after us." See Bibliothèque nationale de Russie, written documents F 608, Pomjalowski, in the Herterich Collection.

⁹² Letter from Gentz to La Fare de Teplice, 17 October 1807, 198 AP 2, 33–35, Archives nationales, Paris.

⁹³ See Maistre, "Mémoire sur l'état présent de l'Europe," *Oeuvres complètes*, 9: 130–82, and Gentz, *Mémoire politique remis au cabinet de Vienne au mois de mai 1804*, Archives diplomatiques à la Courneuve, Correspondance diplomatique Bavière 180, 238–41.

peace and equilibrium in Europe. Equally, at this time they both served the cause of the Bourbons and were both solicited by Louis XVIII⁹⁴ and his agents⁹⁵ as counter-revolutionary thinkers to draft the king's declaration against Napoleon's usurpation in 1804.⁹⁶ In 1813, Louis XVIII again solicited the two great counter-revolutionary thinkers.⁹⁷ But as Gentz was no longer in favour of a restoration of the Bourbons,⁹⁸ it was Maistre who was assigned the declaration project.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, it would seem that it was not until much later that Gentz encountered Maistre¹⁰⁰ and his ideas again, this time at the insistence of his friend Adam Müller. On 19 September 1820, in a long letter in which he argued for a European federative constitution, Müller ended his paper in these terms:

And at this moment, my friend, Maistre came into my hands; then the necessity of the spiritual power, of the pope, of the church imposed

⁹⁴ See the correspondence between Louis XVIII and Gentz, *Mémoires et documents* 603, Archives diplomatiques à la Courneuve, and 198 AP 2, 3, 4, Archives nationales, as well as Maurice Henry Weil, "Le chevalier de Gentz: deux lettres inédites à Louis XVIII," in *Revue historique*, 144 (1923) and Prokesh Osten, *Aus dem Nachlasse Friedrich von Gentz* (Vienna, 1867), 15. The correspondence between Louis XVIII and Maistre may be found in the Fonds Joseph de Maistre, Archives départementales de la Savoie, 2J42.

⁹⁵ Principally, the Marquis de Bonnay (1750–1825), Henri de La Fare (1752–1829), Blacas d'Aulps (1771–1839), and Antoine de Bésiade, duc d'Avaray (1759–1811). For the letters of Louis XVIII's collaborators to Gentz and Maistre, see especially the collection *Mémoire et documents*, 603, 604, 672 at the Archives diplomatiques à la Courneuve; the Fonds Privé La Fare 198 AP 3 4 and 5; Fonds Blacas, 37 AP at the Archives Nationales; and the Fonds Joseph de Maistre, Archives départementales de la Savoie, 2J9, 32, 33, 36, 38, 39, 41 and 43.

⁹⁶ See the *Projet d'une déclaration de Louis XVIII contre le titre impérial usurpé par Bonaparte*, in G. Schlesier, *Mémoires et lettres inédits du chevalier de Gentz* (Stuttgart, 1841), 29–40; and Maistre, Fonds Joseph Maistre, Archives départementales de la Savoie. Pozzo di Borgo was also sought. See the Fonds Joseph de Maistre, 2J42.

⁹⁷ Through the intermediary of Blacas. For Maistre, see the Fonds Joseph de Maistre, Archives départementales de la Savoie, 2J9, 36, 39, 41, 43, and for Gentz, Fonds Blacas, Archives nationales 37 AP/1.

⁹⁸ See especially the duc de Blacas' letter to Gentz dated 7 April 1813, and Prokesh Osten, *Aus dem Nachlasse Friedrich von Gentz*, 16–18.

⁹⁹ "Projet de déclaration: le roi de France à son peuple, salut!" in the Fonds Joseph de Maistre, Archives départementales de la Savoie, 2J9.

¹⁰⁰ As for the question of Gentz's influence on Maistre, my research in the Fonds Joseph de Maistre preserved in the Archives départementales de la Savoie in Chambéry with the goal of finding 'traces' of Gentz in Maistre's writings, reading, and correspondence, has been fruitless. Nor have we found any letters Gentz sent to Maistre. Similarly, we found no mention of Gentz either in Maistre's *carnets de lecture* or correspondence. Nevertheless, Gentz's intellectual sincerity has been acknowledged by all his contemporaries and by commentators worthy of confidence. As for the presumably much more limited influence of Gentz on Maistre compared to that of Maistre on Gentz, this can easily be explained by Maistre's limited mastery of German.

themselves irresistibly. I am referring to the condition for founding the European federation.¹⁰¹

The Maistre that Bonald had suggested to Gentz now found himself acclaimed by Adam Müller. This European federative constitution, which Gentz was delighted to have put in place at Aix-la-Chapelle and which he knew was threatened, was found in Müller's thought, reinforced by Joseph de Maistre's postulates in *Du pape*. In his first responses to Müller, Gentz maintained the distances that he had expressed much earlier with respect to Adam Müller's "theological-mystical" tendencies.¹⁰² For Gentz, these had no place in political discourse. He insinuated that they could not have a practical use in politics.

Nevertheless, Gentz set about reading Joseph de Maistre's book. The beginning of the book pleased him, as he reported to Pilat: "I have read with delight the first half of the first part of the work *Du pape*; unfortunately I cannot speak of it since my arrival at Troppau. When I have finished it, you must hear my opinion about it."¹⁰³ Gentz started reading Maistre in the middle of the Congress of Troppau, while he was developing his theory of the right of intervention of the great powers, which he opposed to the national and constitutional tendencies defended by Capodistria.¹⁰⁴ He sought to consolidate the "European league" by "the maintenance of legal order in the interior of the European states and the fundamental institutions upon which it rested,"¹⁰⁵ and Maistre's pen seemed to influence Gentz and encourage his spiritual fervour much more strongly than his friends in 1819. Thus his fancy for a book on pontifical saintliness was transformed into an almost unbounded admiration. On 2 December 1820, he questioned Pilat:

Who is Dallas,¹⁰⁶ who is La Mennais, who are (apart from Bonald) the writers of our time, compared to Maistre? In my opinion, the book

¹⁰¹ Jakob Baxa, *Adam Müller Lebenszeugnisse*, 386.

¹⁰² Gentz to Müller, 8 October, 1820, *Ibid.*

¹⁰³ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10: 1; Gentz to Pilat, 24 October 1820, 428.

¹⁰⁴ Ioanis Capodistrias (1776–1831). Formerly minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Empire (1816–22), he became the first president of the independent Greek state in 1831. See Hélène E. Koukkou, *Jean Capodistrias, visionnaire et précurseur d'une Europe unie* (Athens: Librairie Kauffmann, 2003). Gentz was equally close to Capodistrias. See Capodistrias' affectionate notes (during the congress of Troppau in October, November 1820) to Gentz, in Cotta Ver. Autogr., *Deutsches Literaturarchiv Marbach, Cotta-Archiv* (Stiftung der Stuttgarter Zeitung).

¹⁰⁵ "Garantieprojekt," Acts of the Congress of Troppau, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv, Fz.39, 202.

¹⁰⁶ Presumably Robert Charles Dallas (1754–1824).

Du Pape is the most sublime and the most important book that has been published for half a century. You have not read it; otherwise, how could you fail to speak of it? Follow my advice: read it carelessly ... your so-called friends surely know it, but no one says a word about it. This kind of meal is certainly too strong for these critical souls who are lying in wait. As for myself, it cost me more than one sleepless night; but what pleasure I have drawn from it. Such depth, with an extraordinary erudition, with such a political perspective, like no Montesquieu ever had, a Burkean eloquence, from time to time a restrained enthusiasm of high poetry: and with it, all the worldly talents... no, I now firmly and profoundly believe that the church will never collapse... I do say that the book has weak points, otherwise my admiration would appear to be blindness, but the weaknesses [of the book] seem lost like spots in the sun... This extraordinary book... is the fruit of half a lifetime. The author has, without doubt, worked for 20 years on the writing of the book... a monument should be erected to him in one of the first churches of Rome...¹⁰⁷

Prepared by his relations with Müller, Schlegel and Pilat to receive Maistre's work favourably as well as by his correspondence with Bonald, he was struck by an almost mystical enthusiasm for Maistre's eloquence, political outlook, and depth. And under the influence of Maistre's book, his leaning towards the Catholic Church was found to be even stronger than in 1805 or 1811.¹⁰⁸

Some weeks later, in similar terms to those employed with Pilat, Gentz explained his reading of Maistre to Müller. In a letter dated 7 December 1820, the latter had begged him to be more lenient with respect to his literary leanings for Lamennais, Bonald and Maistre; he received a more than positive reply from Gentz on 21 December:

During my stay I have read the book *Du pape*. No writer has touched me in this way since thirty years ago when I read Burke's *Reflections*¹⁰⁹ for the first time. Such depth, such political views, such scholarship, such eloquence... so much circumspection and ability (and it was all for the most noble of ends, for the greatest historical and political event of the New

¹⁰⁷ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10:1:458–9.

¹⁰⁸ For a very different, un-mystical, and non-Catholic reading of *Du pape*, see, in this volume, Tonatiuh Useche Sandoval's essay, "Auguste Comte's Reading of Joseph de Maistre's *Du pape*: Two Theories of Spiritual Power."

¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless, Gentz, who had a great tendency to lose his temper in his diatribes in the image of Goethe's Werther, the principal reading of his youth, wrote again in 1826 in his diary entry for January: "In my bed, I read the notes that Görres has written, with respect to some article until now little noticed in *Le Catholique*, and I was touched in an indescribable way by this reading, to the point that I don't think I have read anything so strong and profound since Burke and Maistre." Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:4:4.

World, for the most part little-known) for the possibility (as weak as it might be) of reviving the highest federation of Christian society, for an idea, which although it may remain a dream, will always be the most beautiful and the most precious of human dreams! I declare this book to be the best of our century. There are three or four slight weak points; but they disappear in the brilliance of such a sun... you must translate this book... since it is not written for today or tomorrow, it is not important if your translation is not published until two years time.¹¹⁰

Thus in the light of Friedrich Gentz's correspondence with Müller and Pilat, it seems that Gentz was more than fascinated by his reading of Maistre's *Du pape*. This is especially the case since the theses of the other great counter-revolutionary thinker corresponded to the political questions that drove Gentz and responded to his concerns about the preservation of the unity and stability of Europe. However Gentz's reading of Maistre merits a more profound analysis since Gentz continued to analyse and study Maistre after his first enthusiasm that took place in a very particular context in 1820.

The Scope of Gentz's Reading of *Du pape*

Gentz started reading Maistre's *Du pape* in October 1822 and then again in 1826.¹¹¹ He also reread the *Considérations*¹¹² and plunged into *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* (1821)¹¹³ several times. Thus the exaltation for *Du pape* at the end of the 1820 raises various questions. Was his infatuation with Maistre platonic and the fruit of a passing exaltation?¹¹⁴ Or did the reading of *Du pape* in 1820 really mark a great opening by Gentz to theological questions and Catholic thought and a lasting rapprochement towards Joseph de Maistre's thought?

The registers of precise readings with notes and annotations,¹¹⁵ which Gentz kept regularly, like Joseph de Maistre, are not of great assistance

¹¹⁰ Baxa, *Müller Lebenszeugnisse*, 2: 411.

¹¹¹ On 1 January and 10 October 1822. See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:3:89 and 94.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 25 March 1821. Gentz plunged "until 10'clock in Maistre" and spoke of the "great man" when referring to Maistre. Gentz *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:2:401. On 31 July 1822 he reread "with an insatiable pleasure the chapters of Maistre's immortal work: *Considérations sur la France 1797*." Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:3:69.

¹¹³ On 2 January 1823. See *Ibid.*, 12: 2 and in 1828 Baxa, *Lebenszeugnisse*, 2: 579.

¹¹⁴ See Guglia, *Gentz*, 125 and Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht*, 80.

¹¹⁵ The registers are preserved in part in the *Excerpta aus Maistre* in the Fonds Gentz of the Otto Wolff Collection, Universitäts- und Stadtbibliothek Köln. GN 63, 1826–1830.

in grasping the scope of Metternich's private secretary's reading of *Du Pape*. In these notes, written when he was rereading the book between 1826 and 1830, Gentz only selected a few passages, five in total. They include Count de Maistre's beautiful saying: "Faith is belief through love and love does not argue"¹¹⁶ and a citation from Seneca: "God obeys laws but he is the one who made them." From Chapter XI, devoted to texts by Bossuet, Gentz notes: "revolt: *heresy* in the spiritual order and *revolution* in the temporal order."¹¹⁷ From the chapter on the disadvantages of sovereignty, he picks up: "*the audacious race of Japhet* has never ceased to gravitate towards what is called *freedom*"¹¹⁸ and "*the European*." Finally: "*half the world is employed governing the other half without ever being able to succeed*."¹¹⁹ Therefore, without falling into unfounded intellectual speculation, it is difficult to analyse well what, beyond the idea of European unity, exalted Gentz in *Du pape* to such an extent in 1820. Nevertheless, if Maistre's book and his writings had been no more than a passing but ephemeral nourishment for Gentz, why all this rereading?

In any case, in view of the sources at our disposal on Gentz, it appears that *Du pape* was certainly the work by Maistre that Gentz studied the most. Apart from the *Considérations* and *Les soirées* he did not appear to have had access to any other of Maistre's works.¹²⁰ Hence, the work on the papacy is certainly the one that should be analysed to verify the eventual similarities or mutual influences between Maistre's ideas and those of Gentz. Now several elements concerning Maistre's book could lead us to believe that Gentz's enthusiasm for the Savoyard thinker was much more profound than simple 'Platonic love'¹²¹ or a 'sporadic confrontation'.¹²² First of all, it is striking that the sources utilised by Maistre were in the great majority authors who had marked Gentz for a long time and who occupied a central place in Gentz's political writings. Concretely, Gibbon, Hume, Johannes von Müller, Cicero, and Horace

¹¹⁶ *Excerpta aus Maistre*, Fonds Gentz, Otto Wolff Collection, GN 63, 1826–30. See Joseph de Maistre, *Du pape* (1819), ed. Jacques Lovie and Joannès Chetail, (Geneva: Droz, 1966), 32.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 79.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 238.

¹²⁰ Presumably Gentz would have read neither the *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (1814) nor *De la souveraineté du peuple* (written 1794–96 and unpublished during Gentz's lifetime).

¹²¹ Guglia, *Gentz*, 125.

¹²² Kronenbitter, *Wort und Macht*, 80.

are all authors that Gentz read and restudied after reading Maistre's *Du pape*.¹²³ Similarly, constant reference to Voltaire also surely had an impact on Gentz, who himself was a reader and assiduous interpreter of the philosopher.¹²⁴

Moreover, Maistre's political reflections as well as his historical analyses surely marked the knight of Europe on various levels. Gentz read Maistre's reflections on sovereignty very attentively. In effect, he restudied them at Trent in 1822¹²⁵ while thinking of the famous Council that took place in the city. Now when one compares Maistre's political reflections on the concept of sovereignty and his interpretation of social contract theories with those that Gentz expressed in his youthful works for the *Historisches Journal*,¹²⁶ Gentz's enthusiasm for Maistre's theories could simply be explained by the similarity of thought between the two great counter-revolutionary thinkers. In effect, in *Du pape* one can read: "man therefore being necessarily grouped together and necessarily governed, his will counts for nothing in the establishment of government,"¹²⁷ while in Gentz's reflections on sovereignty one can read: "juridical connections between Men must have a juridical origin"¹²⁸ and "the general will is above the people."¹²⁹ Beyond these citations, by way of example, the ensemble of reflections expressed by Maistre in *Du pape* on sovereignty, the social contract and reflections follow from these, as well as reflections on the right of resistance,¹³⁰ appear to be very close to those expressed by Gentz in the *Historisches Journal*.¹³¹ Similarly, Maistre's long pages on the history of the councils, the history

¹²³ Fonds Gentz, Otto Wolff Collection, GN58, 1826 (Vienna: Gastein, July to November 1827) remarks and notes on Gibbon, *History of the decline and fall of the roman empire* (6 vols., London, 1774–88); and also Auszüge aus Klassikern, *Cicéro epistolae*, GN 3 and *Ciceronis Epistolae*, November 1826, GN 61.

¹²⁴ No study exists on Gentz and Voltaire. Nevertheless, Gentz had read with delight the *Essai sur les mœurs* (1756) and the *Histoire de Charles XII* (1748). Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:1:397, 435. Gentz also cites Voltaire critically, drawing on Voltaire's reflections in many of his writings.

¹²⁵ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 12:3:94.

¹²⁶ See Gentz, "Historisches Journal," "Beiträge zur Berichtigung einiger Ideen der allgemeinen Staatswissenschaft," *Gesammelte Schriften*, 5: 517–52; and *Ibid.*, *Ueber die politische Gleichheit*, 569–75.

¹²⁷ *Du pape*, 130.

¹²⁸ Gentz, "Historisches Journal," "Beiträge zur Berichtigung einiger Ideen der allgemeinen Staatswissenschaft," 517–18.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 536.

¹³⁰ *Du pape*, 132–4.

¹³¹ Gentz, "Historisches Journal," "Beiträge zur Berichtigung einiger Ideen der allgemeinen Staatswissenschaft," 537–40.

of France, on the quarrels between the 'two swords' and on the history of the popes must have delighted Gentz, partly because of Maistre's erudition, but also due to the way Maistre employed history in his political and ideological argument. Once again, here a certain analogy appears between the great thinkers when we consider Gentz's long historical developments on similar subjects in his political reflections.¹³²

However, beyond these similarities of thought and methods of reasoning between Gentz and Maistre, above all, questions concerning Gentz's spirituality and understanding and his relationship to the Catholic religion appear to be raised by his cheerful reading of *Du pape*. While reading *Du pape*, did Gentz accept Maistre's principal thesis on the infallibility of the popes and their sovereignty with respect to European princes? These are delicate questions to grasp, especially because of the contradictory positions that can be observed with respect to his relationship with Catholicism. Gentz's relation to the Christian religion and to faith seems to fluctuate and this is felt not only in his correspondence with Adam Müller even before he read Maistre's work, but until the end of his life.¹³³ Nevertheless, reading Maistre seems to have provoked in Gentz a greater openness to political theology and initiated a period of greater spirituality for him and his strong inclination towards Catholicism was accentuated. It also explains his infatuation with Görres' *Catholique*¹³⁴ in 1826 and his reading of Bossuet in 1827. As for the pope and the power of Rome, here again Gentz's position is contradictory, even if Maistre seems to have provoked a stronger interest in Gentz for the popes. This is evidenced by Gentz's 1826–27 reading oriented toward the history of the popes.¹³⁵ Gentz seems to

¹³² See his writings from the period 1793–1800.

¹³³ Many contradictory statements on this subject can be found in Gentz and his notebooks. He claims the necessity of religion and spirituality. Notably, in 1818/1829 he writes: "At base there are two living parties in Europe, the Religious party and the Republican party, Those who believe in God and those who believe in man. As for me, I am old and broken, I believe in neither the one nor the other and I see events pass by. ... For my pleasure... and my satisfaction." See "Miscellanea," in Fonds Gentz, Otto Wolff Collection, GN 64, 1826–1830. And also his correspondence with Prokesh Osten, Herterich Collection. Here again Gentz's statements are contradictory.

¹³⁴ Joseph Görres (1776–1848). On this great Bavarian political writer, see especially Heribert Raab, *Joseph Görres: Leben und Werk im Urteil seiner Zeit: 1776–1876* (Cologne, Vienna, Munich, 1985), and the works of the Görres-Gesellschaft. In French, see Jean Isler, "Le jeune Joseph Görres et l'évolution intellectuelle et politique en Allemagne de l'Aufklärung cosmopolite au romantisme nationaliste" (Doctoral thesis, Université de Metz, 1983).

¹³⁵ William Roscoe *The Life and Pontificate of Leo the Tenth* (6 vols., 2nd ed., London, 1806). See also "Geschichte der päpste," Fonds Gentz, Otto Wolff Collection, GN 56

have accepted Maistre's theses purely from a theoretical point of view. They played the role of an ideal responding to the search for the stability and unity of Europe. Thus, in September 1823, following the election of a new pope, Gentz wrote to Pilat: "I fear that one can only find true popes in the memories of ancient times and in Maistre's eternal postulates."¹³⁶ But from a practical point of view, the government of Rome was not judged in a very positive way by Gentz. He does not seem to have accepted the superiority of the government of Rome over European monarchs. In one of his last memoirs concerning the occupation of Ancona and the convention signed by Monsignor de Saint Antoine, he regarded the papacy as "an unmanageable and incurable government" and concerning the population of Ancona, he wrote:

the germ of discontent is undeniable in these provinces [...] and comes from the fundamental contrast between peoples tormented by the need for more or less liberal institutions and a government¹³⁷ that regards all innovation as death.¹³⁸

Thus, *Du pape* and Joseph de Maistre's reflections influenced and interested Gentz for a long time. Besides, to a great extent, the two thinkers endeavoured to defend quite similar political and ideological positions. However, although the knight of Europe seems to have regarded Maistre's postulates as theoretical ideals, from a practical point of view he did not share Maistre's ideas on the popes. Nevertheless, Gentz became the advocate and defender of Maistre's ideas and those of Catholic authors in the German-speaking world.

Gentz as a Supporter and Advocate of Maistre and his Ideas in the German-speaking World

Gentz's reading of *Du pape* had repercussions in the German-speaking world because of his privileged political position. The knight of Europe was one of the most important partisans in the diffusion of Maistre's ideas in the German-speaking world from 1821. Because his political

and GN 45, 18s. Gentz noted in his reading journal Archibald Bower's *A History of the Popes*, (7 vols., 3rd ed., London, 1750–66). See Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 8.

¹³⁶ Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10:2:153.

¹³⁷ Understood to be that of the pope.

¹³⁸ It is certainly the last political memoir written by Friedrich Gentz: "Observations sur l'occupation d'Ancône et sur la convention signée par Mr. de St. Antoine," sent 4 May 1832, *Fonds Gentz, Collection Otto Wolff*, GN 105.

influence was nevertheless limited, Gentz did not succeed in preventing the book's censorship, which occurred shortly after it began to be circulated in Austria and German-speaking Europe. In effect, the book was censored in accordance with the new regulations established by the Congress of Carlsbad. In a new letter to Pilat on 27 February 1821, regarding the procedure of censorship that risked striking Maistre's book, Gentz did not appear too bothered about acting in favour of its free circulation:

All that makes no difference to me. This book is so above all censorship, so above our time, that I will not pay attention to this kind of childishness. Do you think that we must regret the fact that it cannot be circulated in our States? Truly, who would read it among us, even if it passed the censorship ten times? To tell the truth, who reads such a book? Perhaps not even 50 people in all of Europe. It is written for a few people and perhaps for better times. Since you keep coming back to the censorship of Wurtemberg, I must tell you that you have completely misunderstood me. What I wrote to you was simply that these dogs, alarmed by attacks ... hold councils upon councils in order to sharpen their censorship laws. Never did I have the idea of thinking that they did this with good sense. I wrote it to you as being an astonishing anecdote about how the wicked fall into their own traps.¹³⁹

He nonetheless sought to obtain the decree. "Baron Mercy promised me to obtain from Vienna the decrees concerning the censorship of the book *Du pape*."¹⁴⁰ But he could not intervene, and he stated shortly after Maistre's death:

I consider it to be a fantastic intervention of heaven, that, a few days before the outbreak of the Piedmontese insurrection, the immortal Maistre had to leave this world that was no longer worthy of him and thus avoided the profound sorrow into which the foul apostasy of his own country has plunged it. I had once again spoken much of Maistre with Saint Marsan a day after his trip. I had even entrusted him with many messages to convey to Maistre. But Maistre was dead and Saint Marsan reached Turin 24 hours after the Revolution and found Maistre's own son and the majority of his family among the traitors! The assessment of the intellectual censorship of Vienna of the work *Du Pape* had been signed by a certain Rutenstock.¹⁴¹ I do not like going into explanations about that in order not save myself from displeasure; the time will

¹³⁹ Friedrich Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10:2:35.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 41.

¹⁴¹ Presumably Jakob Rutenstock (1776–1844), Doctor of theology and professor, holder of the chair of ecclesiastical history at the University of Vienna, the author of *Institutiones historiae ecclesiasticae* (3 volumes) that appeared in Vienna in 1832–34.

come for that, and always too soon for the affliction that you and I must feel for such phenomena. What is going to be decided in this respect, I do not know either. I have the acts here and I fear to speak of them, for I am no longer confident about a solution for this.¹⁴²

Before the censorship of the book, he insisted to his two principal interlocutors so that one of them would begin the translation of *Du pape*.¹⁴³ Thus, he asked Adam Müller to become personally involved in his letter dated 21 December 1820 and equally to Pilat, some days before, in these terms:

It would give me great pleasure if you would set about translating Maistre's eternal books yourself. This is surely a difficult task; but perhaps your restless head will thus find itself transported to a better equilibrium.¹⁴³

The first German translation of Joseph de Maistre's work was however neither the work of Pilat nor Müller but of Moritz Lieber.¹⁴⁴ Thus Gentz did not succeed directly in propagating Maistre's ideas despite his leanings in this direction.

However he did successfully promote Maistre's ideas indirectly through his role in Metternich's press system¹⁴⁵ and his political influence. Thus, Eckstein's famous review¹⁴⁶ of *Du pape* was published in 1821 in the *Jahrbücher der Literatur*, a journal founded and monitored by Gentz and Metternich. Moreover, Gentz became the protector of writers with counter-revolutionary and Catholic tendencies and he encouraged the diffusion of their ideas. Thus, Haller's *La restauration de la science de l'État* that Gentz had read with delight was sent to Metternich to promote its diffusion.¹⁴⁷ In a letter dated the 14 June 1821 he wrote to Haller, who had just converted to Catholicism, that his spirit and his ideas were fully in accordance with his own.¹⁴⁸ Furthermore,

Upon Gentz's death in 1832, Francis I made him regency counsellor and director of studies in the lycées in all the hereditary states of Austria.

¹⁴² Gentz, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10:2:55.

¹⁴³ Gentz, Letter dated 16 December 1820, *Gesammelte Schriften*, 10:1:471.

¹⁴⁴ Moritz Lieber (1790–1860). See also Schneider, *Joseph de Maistre*, 1753–1821, 41.

¹⁴⁵ Kronenbitter, 176–89.

¹⁴⁶ On Ferdinand Eckstein (1790–1861), see François Berthiot, *Le baron d'Eckstein, journaliste et critique littéraire* (Paris: Editions des écrivains, 1998). For his review of Maistre, see 147–9.

¹⁴⁷ Gentz to Haller, 21 June 1820, certified copy in Herterich Collection, original in Fonds Haller, K 92 1 and 2.

¹⁴⁸ Gentz to Haller, 14 June 1821, certified copy in Herterich Collection, original in Fonds Haller, K 92 1 and 2. Gentz added: "you will be accepted by Vienna."

being unable to edit it himself, he favoured the creation of a counter-revolutionary and Catholic journal, *Der Staatsmannes*,¹⁴⁹ edited by Pfeilschifter¹⁵⁰ who, like Adam Müller before him, became Gentz's *protégé*. Upon the receipt of the first volume of Pfeilschifter's journal, Gentz's letter to his new 'pupil' the "day of the Holy Virgin" could not have been clearer with respect to the influence that Maistre's work had produced on Gentz:

Through this writing you have responded to all my expectations. ... You have become a treasure for me and you have earned my confidence forever. It is certainly there where the profound roots of the sicknesses of the time are found. The veneration of the church (there is only one and there can only be one in Christianity) was the true foundation of our political institutions. To plead the religious cause against the wretched... I regard this as one of the greatest merits that a writer can acquire today. Not everyone can act in this sense with effectiveness by virtue of his relations, his position, his work,¹⁵¹ but someone who is free like you, enlightened by the truth, like you, and Catholic like you, raises his voice on this high and holy question. *Macte virtute tua!*^{152,153}

The Catholic and conservative journal defended and supported by Gentz was published until 1831. In 1824, Gentz even sought to bring Pfeilschifter and his journal *Der Staatsmannes* back to Vienna.¹⁵⁴

Thus, not only was Gentz subjugated by his reading of Maistre's *Du pape* but also it is certainly this reading that marked the most intensely 'Catholic' period of Gentz's life. He championed Maistre's ideas in the German-speaking world, and encouraged their diffusion through his political and journalistic influence. Many of Maistre's political ideas were in a number of aspects very close to those of the great German political thinker. Incidentally, Gentz's enthusiastic reading of Joseph de Maistre's *Du pape* was well prepared by the connections woven between

¹⁴⁹ *Der Staatsmann: Zeitschrift für Politik und Tagesgeschichte*, 1822–1831. Eckstein also published articles in this journal, as did Gentz.

¹⁵⁰ On Johann Baptist von Pfeilschifter (1793–1874), see Erwald Reinhard, *Johann Baptist von Pfeilschifter, der bayerische Plutarch* (Munich, 1960) and Hubert Rumpel, *Johann Baptist Pfeilschifter und die österreichische Staatskanzlei*, 1954.

¹⁵¹ Gentz was referring implicitly to himself: he could not do it because of his work and his position especially with respect to Austrian politics.

¹⁵² "More power to you!" or "Well done!"

¹⁵³ Unpublished letter from Gentz to Johann Baptist von Pfeilschifter in Frankfurt, 15 August 1822, Wienbibliothek, Handschriftabteilung, Inv. Nr. 6610, also in the Herterich Collection.

¹⁵⁴ Unpublished letter from Gentz in Vienna to Johann Baptist von Pfeilschifter in Frankfurt, 23rd May 1824, Herterich Collection.

Gentz and Bonald and his lasting relationship with French-speaking literary and Catholic milieus as well as by the growing influence exercised by Adam Müller on Gentz. With respect to the question of the knight of Europe's religiosity and his link with political romanticism, it seems that his position, invariable until 1819–20, suddenly underwent a well-known and long-term change after the reading of *Du pape*, which lasted at least until 1827–28. However, with respect to the contradictory statements made by Gentz himself, it is difficult to have a fixed opinion on his religiosity. Gentz believed in God and was a non-practicing follower of the Lutheran tradition, with a strong leaning towards Catholicism, especially after 1819, though he never converted. Thus, he retained the independence of mind of a 'free thinker', which so characterised him, while at the same time promoting and defending the propagation of Maistre's ideas and a press with Catholic tendencies, according to his own inclinations and personality, through political and literary networks within which he was an essential figure.



“ALL EVIL IS THE CANCELLATION OF UNITY”:
JOSEPH DE MAISTRE AND LATE GERMAN ROMANTICISM

Adrian Daub

Introduction

In 1798, the German Romantic poet Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg) wrote a collection of aphorisms entitled *Glauben und Liebe oder der König und die Königin* (1798). Novalis' aphorisms juxtaposed the cold mechanism of written constitutions with the warmth of a sociality founded on principles that were at once familial and monarchical, a position that appears to strikingly anticipate Maistre's *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines* (1814), Louis de Bonald's *Du divorce* (1801), and Karl Ludwig von Haller's *Restauration der Staatswissenschaft* (1816–34). This link, privileged by Robert Triomphe in what remains the most detailed study of Maistre's relationship to Germany,¹ entails a misunderstanding of Novalis' project, and that of the early Romantics and Idealists with him. Instead, the way Maistre absorbed German sources and in turn influenced a number of prominent German thinkers highlights the development of German Romantic thought from a Kantian anti-Rousseauism to a position much closer to the thought of the French Reaction.

The Novalis of 1798 does not posit the same relationship between family and monarchy as Maistre; the Friedrich Schlegel of 1818 very much does. This article proposes to chart this development through the prism of the family. When Robert Triomphe argued for a 'twin brotherhood' between Maistrian Catholicism and what he terms 'German crypto-Catholicism,'² his desire to stabilize what we might call the family resemblance led him to ignore or underplay this development. Maistre's reception and resonances in Germany varied greatly with time. Rather than a stable kinship, the German Romantics'

¹ See Robert Triomphe, "Joseph de Maistre et l'Allemagne," in *Joseph de Maistre: Etude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique* (Geneva: Droz, 1968), 489–586.

² Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre*, 528.

relationship to Maistre was something they had to grow into—the slowness of their rapprochement (for it was their thought rather than his that seems to have budged) may seem surprising given how much consonance we can find even in the earliest writings of Schlegel, Schelling, Novalis and the young Hegel and the Counter-revolution. And yet: between *De la souveraineté du peuple* of 1794 and *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* of 1821, Maistre's written output spanned much of the period of what is today considered to comprise German Romanticism. The differences between the Romantics' starting point and Maistre's thinking, their gradual alignment, and the debt the more conservative Romantic writings of the 1810s owed to the Savoyard map out a brief history of German Romanticism.

Telling the story of transition in its entirety would require a book in its own right. In this article, I propose to retrace what Triomphe called a 'twin brotherhood' by using the very question of filiality, fraternity, and paternity as a guide. In the changing ways in which the Romantics think the relationship of family to state, we find a reflection of their evolving relationship to Maistre and his thought. In the aftermath of the revolution the family was fraught territory: the family as model had been central for the ideologues of absolutism, and the family as a possibly egalitarian social structure had been important to Rousseau and other exponents of the Enlightenment (in particular in Germany).

However, the German reaction to both Enlightenment and Counter-revolution unfolded very much structured by familial metaphors. From Starck's indictment of "philosophism" as the work of "women"³ and "the new androgynes"⁴ and his consequent advocacy of the patrimonial state (*Patrimonialstaat*), to the older Friedrich Schlegel's and Franz von Baader's conservative political erotics, which essentially combine Maistre with François Hemsterhuis, questions of familial structure, paternal authority, and filial piety come to decisively structure the German Romantics' evolving relationship to Maistre and Bonald. At the same time, resistance to Maistrian ideas, in particular from Hegel and his school, traces the story of the gradual diremption of Romantic and Idealist traditions in German thought.

³ Johann August Starck, *Der Triumph der Philosophie im achtzehnten Jahrhundert*, (Germantown: Rosenblatt, 1804), 1: 213.

⁴ Johann August Starck, "Die neuen Androgynen," *Wiener Magazin der Literatur und Kunst*.

In the following, I will focus on three thinkers who trace out the development of the German reaction to Maistre among the thinkers of the Romantic 'mainstream'—the poet Friedrich von Hardenberg, called Novalis (1772–1801), the poet, philosopher, and literary scholar Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) and the Romantic philosopher of nature Franz von Baader (1765–1841). Of the three, Novalis is the only who did not leave any writings indicating that he had read Maistre, though it appears he was familiar enough with Counter-revolutionary *topoi* to try to sidestep them in his own work on family and state. Schlegel and Baader, on the other hand, had read most of Maistre's published works (as well as those of Bonald), and continued to do so as Maistre's works appeared in print in the 1810s and 20s.⁵

Reconstructing this engagement with Maistrian ideas, and the shift it entails in German Romanticism will mean (a) unearthing Maistre's thinking on the family, its structure, and its relationship to the state, a topic that has received only scant attention in Maistre-scholarship thus far. It will mean (b) constructing a relationship between Novalis' thinking on the family and Maistre's. Even though there is no evidence Novalis knew Maistre's work, it will be my contention that Novalis' writings on family and polity are clearly in critical dialogue with a line of thought very much like Maistre's and Bonald's. Just as certain early Romantic precepts that predated the engagement with Maistre nevertheless are "twins" of those of the French Reaction (as Triomphe would have it), others can be construed as attempts to evade certain *topoi* of reactionary thought.

Maistre and Bonald on the Family

Turning to the philosophical *topos* of the family to elucidate Maistre's fate among German philosophers runs up against one central problem: in his published writings, Maistre himself has relatively little to say about the family. This, however, can be offset by two factors: For one, when Maistre does mention the family, it fulfils an absolutely central role in his texts; for another, however, the German Romantics appear to have read sexuality into Maistre; what is more, Maistre's reception

⁵ For Maistre's own reception of Schlegel's thought and its impact on Russia, see, in this volume, Carolina Armenteros' article, "Preparing the Russian Revolution: Maistre and Uvarov on the History of Knowledge."

in Germany seems to have proceeded apace with that of Louis de Bonald. Schlegel, Baader, and Haller—they all rarely mention one thinker without the other. Unlike Maistre, Bonald has a theory of the family, set forth in his *Du divorce* of 1801—a work very much in line with Maistre's thinking. Reconstructing Maistre's and Bonald's view of the family makes immediately clear that familial generativity and temporal sovereignty are aligned in much the same way in Maistre's work as they are in several of the theories of what is today called early Romanticism (*Frühromantik*). An in-depth analysis of a text roughly contemporaneous with *Du divorce* will show, however, that this alignment functions quite differently on the German side than on the French.

The link between philosophical accounts of the family and the state as somehow analogous goes back to at least Aristotle; and to turn to familial relationships as a model for the organization of a state was a central facet of philosophical justifications of absolutism. But by the turn of the eighteenth century, the straightforward paternalism of Sir Robert Filmer's *Patriarcha* (1680), claiming that the relationship between king and subject was that between father and offspring, was no longer viable. Maistre himself makes this clear in *De la souveraineté du peuple*, but he puts an interesting new twist on the parallelism: "But to say that sovereignty does not come from God because he uses men to establish it, is to say that he is not man's creator because we all have a father and a mother."⁶ Fatherhood and royalty are not the same thing, except that they structurally resemble one another with respect to divine providence. An individual father produces offspring, but the final cause of that offspring is divine providence operating through the father; likewise, an earthly authority makes laws and constitutions, but that authority derives from divine providence as mediated through the earthly sovereign.

It is of course likely that Maistre stops short of such an emphatic parallelism, and offers the parallel provenance of man-made legislation and biological offspring simply as a convenient metaphor. Others, however, made that link much more explicit. In 1801, Louis de Bonald, alongside Maistre the most important theorist of the French reaction,

⁶ Joseph de Maistre, "On the Sovereignty of the People," in *Against Rousseau: "On the State of Nature" and "On the Sovereignty of the People,"* trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), 46.

wrote a book entitled *Du divorce*.⁷ In his book, Bonald undertook to critique what he regarded as the deleterious effects of Enlightenment atomism and rationalism on human sociality, singling out Rousseau's philosophy of sexuality. Unlike Maistre's broadsides against Rousseau, which tend to focus on the idea of a social contract, Bonald is concerned in particular with the relationship that furnishes Maistre's metaphor—that between parents and their offspring.

Bonald's claims take as his point of departure the supposed absence of children in Rousseau's account of the sexual relationship. Given that Rousseau devoted an entire book, *Émile*, to *l'éducation* and is generally credited as the inventor of modern notions of childhood, this charge may seem absurd. But Bonald's charge is not that Rousseau neglects children and their role in the family; instead, he claims that in posing the very question of the sexual relationship between man and woman, Rousseau misses the point of family life ("domestic society," as Bonald calls it) altogether. "Father and mothers [are] considered by philosophy as males and females,"⁸ a move that for one unduly biologizes what is in actual fact a spiritual relation (opposed to mere biology), and for another neglects the inherent relationality of human life—in speaking of "males" and "females," philosophy thinks, to purloin Hegel's later terminology, "abstractly."⁹

This abstraction also entails a de-ethicized view of the family, as Bonald makes clear with respect to nursing habits. Rousseau's emphasis on a state of nature, Bonald claims, has led mothers to nurse children themselves, as though both mother and child were animals. Under the influence of what Bonald regards as Rousseau's materialism, biological education takes the place of spiritual education, which would, if properly undertaken, actually serve to divest the relationship between mother and child of its biological component. In Rousseau, in other

⁷ While W. Jay Reedy has most recently warned again over-identifying the thought of Bonald with that of Maistre (W. Jay Reedy, "Maistre's Twin? Louis de Bonald," in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought, and Influence*, ed. Richard Lebrun (Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2001)), their social philosophies seem to overlap to a greater extent than some of the other aspects of their respective oeuvres. What is more, the two thinkers were insistently paired up and even equated in the writings of the German Romantics, although usually to Bonald's detriment—they seem to have regarded Bonald as essentially Maistre's stooge.

⁸ Louis de Bonald, *On Divorce*, trans. Nicholas Davidson (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1992), 21.

⁹ Hegel, "Wer denkt abstrakt?" in *Werke II* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1979).

words, education in accordance with nature leads to ethical education; Bonald on the other hand claims that ethical education consists in canceling out the barbarizing effects of nature. The central point in Bonald's account, however, is that part of this civilizing mission of good parenting is an insistence on hierarchies—for him, the family that raises its children according to the precepts of Rousseau's philosophical anthropology essentially regresses into something of an egalitarian pack of animals.

The emphasis on hierarchy already betrays the fact that Bonald's critique of Rousseau's theory of sexuality is meant as a critique of the French Revolution. Once the bonds of the family were severed by the cold, abstracting materialism of the Enlightenment, Bonald argues, "political society was shaken to its very foundations."¹⁰ What allows him to claim such direct repercussions from 'domestic society' to 'public society' is the premise that both forms of 'society' are essentially parallel, especially because the family's relations (and by that he means relations of sovereignty) directly mirror those of the state. Father, mother, child, once stripped of their entanglements with human creatureliness turn into "power, minister, subject."¹¹ The family, when properly divested of animality, looks a lot like a state; and the state is, after all, nothing but "a human power, ministers, and subjects who are not fathers, mothers, or children in terms of physical relationship, but who ... present an end *similar* to that of the family"¹²

While Maistre does not focus on the question of divorce, his *De la souveraineté du peuple* promulgates a rather similar critique of Rousseau, and turns to the family as the central refutation of Enlightenment social philosophy. Just as Bonald, Maistre argues that Rousseau's notion of a social contract is subtended by a stark social atomism, in which there exists a pre-social man, naturally good, but perverted by his entrance into society. Maistre, on the other hand, insists on the always already social nature of human beings, to the point that an extra-social human being is not really human at all. Human beings are always already inserted into social arrangements, even if those arrangements remain as yet 'embryonic'. The first and most rudimentary stage of such human embeddedness is the family, an ineluctable horizon of interpersonal dependence and communal life.

¹⁰ *On Divorce*, 22.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 45.

¹² *Ibid.*, 55.

More importantly, the family constitutes the hinge between the providential sphere of human essence and the political sphere. The Enlightenment's atomistic view of the origins of society misses not only on epistemological grounds; it also misunderstands the role of divine providence in human affairs. For it is not just nature that has made human beings necessarily social—instead it is God's promise that "the earth as a whole is intended for man's habitation" that gives rise to the need for the "multiplication of man" in procreation. The sociality of the family is divinely decreed, and it institutes the sphere in which sociality takes more or less elective forms. If Enlightenment atomism were correct, Maistre asserts, then sovereignty would be nothing but a human convention, something the individual buys into when "entering" society. If we were to "imagine an isolated man [,] there is no question of laws or government, since he is not a whole man and society does not yet exist." If we extend the thought experiment and "put this man into contact with his fellowmen: from this moment you suppose a sovereign."¹³

This initial "contact" is of course nothing other than the family: "The first man was king of his children; each isolated family was governed in the same way."¹⁴ The family represents the irreducible hold of sovereignty over human beings, a sovereignty that is ultimately underwritten by God. To abstract from this irreducible sovereignty and place the desocialized individual on a pedestal is the same as to deny a providential element in the human polity. And to treat human beings as abstract individuals, that is democratically, is nothing other than to reduce them to something less than human—Bonald's pack of feral beasts. What is ultimately at stake in Bonald's critique of the reform in family structures in the wake of the French Revolution is nothing other than (a) the organic constitution of the state and (b) the very analogy between family and the state that provides *le fin* of both: the preservation of human beings, either as family units (the purpose of the state) or as individuals (the purpose of the family). These two "ends" overlap in the figure of the child—the individual child of the marriage and the subject-child of the sovereign. Divorce one, and you divorce the other.

Bonald, while well-acquainted with Madame de Staël later in life, would have been unknown (to say nothing of distasteful) to the young

¹³ Maistre, "On the Sovereignty of the People," 53.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Romantics and Idealists. What nevertheless makes him and Maistre significant for a group of thinkers that would encounter their thought only much later, is that for both Maistre and him, the analogy between family and state is a factor of sovereign power. What licenses the direct correspondence he posits between family and state is that patriarchal power is like state power. This notion, born of the experience of the upheavals of the revolutionary period, was something the young German thinkers, drawing on a very different view of the revolution and the changes it wrought, sought to avoid. Thus, Bonald identifies a central feature in analogistic thinking about family and state, one that haunted Romantic thought about the family as a constant danger at least during its first decade (it can at least be argued that they grew more comfortable with it the idea, as they got older and more conservative). Setting up a straightforward analogy, as Bonald does, between *société domestique* and *société publique* means casting the domestic unit's children in direct correspondence to the subjects of a sovereign.

And yet, Bonald's claim that there is something reductive and reifying in the Enlightenment's treatment of family (and by extension social) cohesion is one that the Romantics, even at their most Jacobin, would have wholeheartedly endorsed. German Romantic theories of family, love, and marriage attempted precisely to forestall a picture of sexuality that breaks down into atomized units that precede their relation to one another. Thinkers like Novalis looked for ways of using the family to critique not just familial but also social atomism more widely by analogizing family and society *without* subscribing to the corresponding analogy of child and royal subject. How, in other words, to follow the first part of Bonald's critique without slipping into the second part? Or, somewhat schematically, how to critique the social effects of Enlightenment without sacrificing the French Revolution?

As we shall see, it is this problem that occasions the semiotic turn in Novalis' marital philosophy: Novalis wants to draw on an analogy between family and state, *macroanthropos* and *anthropos*, but he is leery of letting such analogies ground relationships of dominance characteristic of the absolutist state. In other words, Novalis seems quite aware that the language of the family is usually introduced into theories of the state in order to justify a paternalistic regime. In order to forestall this possibility, he introduces semiotic relationships that disperse sovereignty as a straightforward analogy of the power of the *pater familias* and that of the absolute monarch. Averting this possibility

dominates Novalis' reflections on loving couples and their kingdoms in his fairy tales, which work through an increasingly dizzying calculus aimed at upsetting traditional structures of dominance, opting for confusion rather than hierarchization. Just as love represents a chaotic indistinction of the lovers, the state that love builds is based on semiotic relationships irreducible to simple unilateral assertions of power.

Faith, Love, and Sovereignty: Novalis

Glauben und Liebe was written in early 1798 and published in July of the same year, at a time when Novalis was struggling to elaborate his own philosophy both out of and against Johann Gottlieb Fichte's metaphysics and political philosophy. It attempts to describe a polity based not on the constraint of the selfish individual (as theories in the natural law-tradition would), but rather on the outward ripples of voluntary self-limitation. In this attempt, Novalis drew from Fichte a number of philosophemes that would become characteristic for the philosophy of nascent Romanticism: an insistence on the organic nature of the ideal state, a desire for a reconciliation of particular and universal, a rejection of social atomism and of eudaimonism. What makes Novalis' text distinctive, however, is the fact that it deploys what appears as a straightforwardly monarchist model to ends that seem entirely opposed to those that Bonald and Maistre were developing simultaneously. While the subtitle of *Glaube und Liebe* is "the king and the queen," the two monarchs by their very two-ness (and especially by their coupledness) seem designed to forestall the kinds of conclusions the French reaction drew from similar ideas about family and state.

The piece's subtitle refers to a very real and very well-known royal couple: Friedrich Wilhelm III acceded to the Prussian throne on November 16, 1797, an event that was greeted with great expectations among the Prussian populace and intelligentsia. But it was in particular his beautiful wife Luise who inflamed their enthusiasm. At least part of the fascination the young royal couple held for their time was due to the fact that theirs was a love-marriage rather than a dynastic one. Novalis picked up on their mystique in his essay, which Schlegel helped him place at the newly founded *Jahrbücher der Preußischen Monarchie*. Novalis intended his collection of fragments as a sort of intervention at a point in time when the old Prussian monarchy, which Novalis criticized

as a “machine-like administration,”¹⁵ seemed capable of renewal and reinvention—the text’s program was to reform this “mechanical state” via a “chemical marriage.” However, the reception seems to have been puzzled rather than inspired—the group of *Politische Aphorismen* which Novalis had intended as the follow-up to *Glaube und Liebe* never appeared in the journal—it seems on the king’s own orders.

As the title of Novalis’ essay makes clear, it turns to love as its central engine, and indeed it is love that largely replaces Maistre’s and Bonald’s sovereign power in (a) internally uniting both state and family and (b) making one more like the other. Novalis goes a step further, however, by making love the faculty by which the parallel between state and family becomes visible in the first place. Maistre and Bonald had argued that there is a mystery at the heart of the family, something that cannot be penetrated by the reason of Enlightenment social theory. The very ground of the analogy of state and family (sovereign power) was providential and inaccessible to reason. Novalis agrees, but he attempts to identify what kind of faculty could claim access to this ground. What makes his solution so ingenious and distinctive is the fact that this faculty turns out to be nothing other than love itself. While Bonald seems to regard family as safeguarding the ends of the state, and Maistre regards the state as an evolutionary development of the family, Novalis turns to no external factors, but rather explains the interrelation of both institutions in terms of their centripetal force itself.

The result of this triple deployment of love came in for its fair share of persiflage and ridicule (most immediately perhaps from his friend and colleague F.W.J. Schelling, himself no stranger to arcane speculation), but juxtaposing it to the theories of the French Counter-revolution reveals quite clearly what Romantic political theories of the family sought to accomplish: to reject both the excesses of the French Revolution (which they, like Maistre and Bonald, regarded as outgrowths of Enlightenment ideology) and the apologia for the absolutist monarchy. Novalis does this by emphasizing the inherent relationality of political cohesion—while the state he envisions in *Faith and Love* is no rationalist “machine-state,” it is nevertheless internally differentiated and vests sovereign power in an irreducible multiplicity of actors rather than in a single executive. Novalis creates this multiplicity by sidestepping

¹⁵ Novalis (Friedrich von Hardenberg), *Novalis Schriften: Historisch Kritische Ausgabe*, 4 vols. (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1960), 2, 494/95, no. 36 [henceforth HKA].

precisely the solution offered by Bonald and Maistre. He eliminates children from the picture (as Bonald charges Rousseau with doing), but keeps the irreducibly relationality of the marriage relation; and he substitutes a semiotic relationship for the filial relationship—the bond between parents and children becomes that between signifier and signified. Love signifies not primarily for the lovers, but rather for society as a whole; the love (and marriage) that obtain between these two are significant for the state as a whole, not so much for the love/marital partners themselves.

The royal couple thus functions as both paradigm and a symbol in *Glaube und Liebe*. "A true royal couple is for the whole human being what a constitution is for the mere understanding;"¹⁶ only their love can bring love to the state at large.¹⁷ What is it that "a constitution" does "for the mere understanding," and, by analogy, what exactly is it "a true royal couple" does for "the whole human being"? Constitution and "true royal couple" represent two different ways of thinking the relationship of individual and universal. In the former case the understanding can grasp itself only as an accidental variable in a system of rules and formulae, whereas in the latter case all human faculties can comprehend their relation to the whole *as symbolized* by the royal couple. It is clear that Novalis cannot be thinking of king and queen as a *model* which the citizenry is to emulate directly. Rather, the royal couple is the symbol or the appearance (*Darstellung*) of something that is always already visible to the right kind of intuition (*Anschauung*), namely the oneness of the state in and through love.¹⁸ Novalis argues that the pure signifier of the law is insufficient, associating the mere "letter" of the law with the mechanistic machine state (exemplified in the "Constitution"). Novalis next argues that the subjective principle, as embodied or "symbolized" by a ruler, is necessary for the internal articulation of a society. The "mystical sovereign" is an idea which we can encounter only in symbolized form in the guise of "a human being deserving love."

But this argument justifies only some kind of (hereditary) monarch. Why is it that we need a "true royal couple," rather than simply a single ruler? The need for the couple arises from an opposition of the "letter"

¹⁶ Novalis, *HKA*, 2: 292.

¹⁷ Hans Wolfgang Kuhn, *Der Apokalyptiker und die Politik: Studien zur Staatsphilosophie des Novalis* (Freiburg i. B.: Rombach, 1960), 123.

¹⁸ Kuhn, *Der Apokalyptiker und die Politik*, 136.

of the constitution and “family life.” Our present time, Novalis argues, is not only the age of the letter (of the mechanical rather than the organic state), it is also an age “without a sense for the life of the family.” In fact, family life is the “most beautiful poetic form of society,” as well as the one closest to nature—because it is most visibly structured and held together by love. The concept of love appears in *Glaube und Liebe* in three different guises, although all of them are subtended by a single structure. Novalis first introduces the concept of love tethered to a system of correspondences or similarities: “When one loves, one finds and sees similarities everywhere.”¹⁹ Love constitutes a world of correspondences; it allows the individual to become a trope of the universal, the universal a trope for the individual. The “I” is to both look for itself in an object (*as though* it were there—a projection of subjectivity) and to find it there (insofar as it is *actually* there—a recognition of an objectivity).

In the case of a lover, we can see how this allows for a duality within the identity that for Novalis characterizes love: seeing the object *as though* there are correspondences preserves the alterity of the other that the simple finding of *actual* correspondences threatens to eliminate. However, it is crucial to note that Novalis is not primarily speaking of a love between lovers: “überall” seems to indicate that, as in the I/Thou distinction, we are dealing with something like Schelling’s concept of nature. Such, it appears, is the cognitive status of Novalis’ self-professed “language of tropes and riddles.” It is a discourse of love, or rather it takes love to read for correspondences. In a letter to Friedrich Schlegel (from May 5, 1798), Novalis remarks of *Faith and Love* that “one cannot read it without faith and love.”²⁰ This, as we shall see, is the heart of Novalis’ marital semiotics: love, marriage, and family are ways of coding and decoding that provide richer access to the outside world than the mechanistic determinations of propositional judgment.

In his model, Novalis recurs to the concept of “love” in three different ways: firstly, love is that which makes it possible to read and/or constitute the couple “König/Königin” as a model for the universal at all—the very correspondence between the royal marriage and the larger polity has as its condition of possibility nothing other than love. Secondly, however, it is clear that this marriage and national politics are

¹⁹ Novalis, *HKA*, 2: 482.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 253.

themselves internally constituted in and through love—what we learn through love is again nothing other than love. Thirdly, the sense we gain through this learning process insofar as it corresponds to an *Allheit* (all of existence rather than those aspects accessible to the understanding, the whole human being rather than the understanding) is itself called love.²¹ This is the sense in which Jacobi uses "faith [*Glauben*]" and it seems as though in Novalis' text the eponymous "faith" and "love" converge in this last sense.

While Novalis' text does not recur as explicitly to theological precepts as the social philosophies of the Counter-revolution, the triplicity of love draws on its own religious tradition, albeit not Catholic ones. Rather, it has its antecedents in certain Protestant, in particular Pietist, theologies of the eighteenth century. The "Moravian" *Brüdergemeine* (also known as "Herrnhuter") founded by Count Nikolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf (1700-1760), for instance, tended to regard the love between marital partners as a duplication and instantiation of Christ's "marriage" with his church—to the point that Zinzendorf regarded the "unification" entailed in (marital) sex as a "holy thing and a sacramental act."²² In a letter to Friedrich Schlegel from July 1796 Novalis holds up Zinzendorf and Spinoza as possible correctives to Fichte's natural law-inspired account of love:

Spinoza and Zinzendorf have investigated it, the infinite idea of love, and they had an intuition of its method, of how they could develop it for themselves, and themselves for it, on this speck of dust. It is a pity that I see nothing of this view in Fichte... But he is close to it. He must step into [love's] magic circle.²³

A complete, "infinite" view of love, combining Fichte's Idealism with Spinoza's Naturalism would require what Novalis calls a "magicalization," that is a direction towards the totality, and it would require a different way of seeing love as well, transcending what Novalis calls mere "reflection." If Fichte were to "step into love's magic circle," his concept

²¹ Similarly, note no. 50 of the *Allgemeine Brouillon* notes that "love is the end of world history—the *unum* of the universe [*Die Liebe ist der Endzweck der Weltgeschichte – das Unum des Universums*];" "love" is thus the name of both the underlying substrate of the universe and the faculty of its cognition (HKA, 2: 248).

²² Cited in: Paul Peucker, "Inspired by Flames of Love: Homosexuality, Mysticism, and Moravian Brothers around 1750," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 16, 1 (2006): 32.

²³ Novalis, HKA, 4: 188.

of love would cease being just concept—it would be expanded both in the direction of the absolute unity that subtends it and in the kind of sense or intuition one would have to employ to understand said unity.

The “magicalization” Novalis calls for involves in particular the first sense of “love” as outlined in *Glaube und Liebe*, that is the ability to analogize. And it is this ability to read for *analogy* that constitutes the central dynamo of Novalis’ political philosophy. It allows us to read any element *x* of the totality as a microcosm (for example, the royal couple as a microcosm of the state), and conversely the totality as encapsulating the specific essence of any element *x* (the state as a *macroanthropos*²⁴): “This is how the *Whole* illuminates the *Part* and the *Part* the *Whole*.”²⁵ When Novalis claims that each person constitutes a “marriage,” that each person is “a small people” or “the most simple form of the state,”²⁶ he is invoking precisely this kind of analogizing cognition. Recognizing analogies requires, or is tantamount to recognizing the identity of the world from the perspective of the absolute. In a collection of fragments known today as the *Allgemeines Brouillon*, Novalis asserts that “the *air de famille* is called analogy [*das Air de Famille nennt man Analogie*].”²⁷ Thus, not only is marriage an *analogon* of the state, but the process of analogization itself resembles, or is analogous to *marriage*. The phrase “*air de famille*” is thus anything but accidental: love, marriage, and family can enter into this self-reinforcing triplicity *only* when they are tacitly equated with one another.

For the forefathers of Romantic philosophy, Kant and Fichte, “love” had a rather straightforward function and performed that function only vis-à-vis the subjects actually involved in a sexual relationship. Whether or not this love makes a family, a marriage, or a macroanthropos, mattered little on his picture. But in order for the royal couple to furnish (1) the ground of analogy, (2) that analogy itself, and (3) the ability to read phenomena in light of the absolute (and hence the ability to read for analogy in the first place), love, family, and marriage have to be essentially coterminous. This is the point where the difference to the French counter-revolutionaries becomes clearest. If marriage/family/love unite only couples, then the family’s relationship

²⁴ Ibid., 286; Novalis writes “Macroandropos.”

²⁵ Novalis, *HKA*, 3: 59.

²⁶ Novalis, *HKA*, 2: 541, 430, 432; 3: 118.

²⁷ Novalis, *HKA*, 2: 540.

to the state cannot be as straightforward as Bonald and Maistre make it.

The most important feature of the structural transfer from family to state in Maistre and Bonald was the link between paternal power and sovereignty. This is of course impossible in a metaphysics of (equitable) coupledness. That in particular the equation of marriage with family (and, by extension, the *oikos*) leaves a couple's *children* in an odd position, will become important in the following section. Novalis is quite serious in likening analogy to marriage and assigning to marriage a semiotic character. Lovers are what he refers to as *Wechselrepräsentationen*, two particulars that can each represent the other because they are identical with respect to the absolute. As such, there is something irreducibly dual and equal to Novalis' model family—the *oikos* models not sovereignty and hierarchy, but instead equality and plurality.

Signifying Families

The semiotic moment inherent in love, the fact that it is concerned as much with the constitution of a phenomenon as the reading or interpretation of that phenomenon, introduces a certain instability into Novalis' model. Since, according to *Faith and Love*, the same faculty has to constitute the "symbol" and allow for its comprehension, the royal couple at the center of the text persists on the threshold between physical reality and representation. When first introducing the figure of the king, Novalis proclaims the invention of a "flowering country" a form of art-making, and remarks: "the inventor [of such a country] would also be the king of inventors."²⁸ Oddly, then, the king enters into the discussion of his country only metaphorically, as the king of inventors. The rest of *Glaube und Liebe* makes clear that this "king of inventors" is in actual fact a king; but Novalis introduces him only as a comparison: the king is like a king. This interesting rhetorical move can hardly count as accidental from a writer so in control of irony (and so explicit in thematizing tropology) as Novalis. What then might it mean that the king, the artistic creator of his country, is introduced only tropologically, as the "king of inventors"?

Novalis' "king and queen," symbols of social cohesion and loving couple in one persist precisely on the boundary between signifier and

²⁸ Ibid., 486.

signified. The poet's "language of tropes and riddles" is needed not to obfuscate or confuse the arrangement, but rather to keep it circulating. This is something Novalis pursued into his more straightforwardly poetic investigations into the political aspects of love. In a famous fairy tale that concludes the poet's novel *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (written in 1800 and published posthumously), Novalis stages a sly allegory of the generation of a utopian polis, in which the individuals undergo a dizzying array of transmutations, amorous reconfigurations, and translations, only to end up in three stable royal couples. So far so Bonaldian—however, Novalis' narration proceeds with the utmost caution in describing this outcome: we learn that one couple becomes the other's earthly embodiment, while the third is its "steward [*Statthalter*]." In all these descriptions, the narration obfuscates entirely which couple is which, and which other couple they represent or are placeholders for.

The family here functions as the model for the perfect *polis*—but the relationship between (royal) family and state, by dint of its semiotic aspects, frustrates rather than cements any analogy between sovereign and paternal power. Rather than relating to their subjects as though to their children, the royal couples of the fairy tale are entirely in a signifying relationship to each other and their subjects. In *Glaube und Liebe* Novalis similarly substitutes the signifying relationship for the filial one. While his titular "king and queen" have a child, that child is significant not because it constitutes the future monarch, but rather because it makes fleshly the unifying love that animates the royal couple. For Hegel, children represented the "externalization" of the unifying love of the parents, which had its "concept" in marriage—this externalization led necessarily to the dissolution of the family.²⁹ For Novalis, marriage and externalization seem to be the same mechanism: bringing a (royal) child into the world constitutes "the most primitive choice"—it represents not the dissolution of their union, but rather "the unanimity of this election."³⁰

In his fragmentary *Allgemeines Brouillon*, Novalis similarly extols the "whole couple" and remarks that "a marriage should really be a

²⁹ Hegel, *Werke*, 7: 309; Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, 204.

³⁰ Novalis, *HKA*, 2: 488. This argument is strikingly similar to the one Hegel offers in §286 of the *Philosophy of Right*. See also: Mark Tunick, "Hegel's Justification of Hereditary Monarchy," *History of Political Thought*, 12 (1991): 481–96; Jean-Michel Chaumont, "Amour, famille, propriété—Arendt, Hegel, Marx et la Question du Majorat," *Revue philosophique de Louvain*, 85, 67: 371–401.

slow, continual embrace, generation... formation of a common, harmonic being." That suggests that the "primitive choice" that makes a king is not made by the king, but by the (preceding) royal couple; their "auto-genesis", their "formation of a common, harmonious being" is structurally identical with their child. Analogously, it is not the physical child (i.e. the "product" of the unifying "embrace"), but rather the couple in its difference-in-unity that serves as "idea" and "symbol" for the education of the citizen. The "formation of a common [*Bildung eines Gemeinsamen*]" cannot come to rest in the figure of the sovereign—the *Bildung* of the royal marriage comes to fruition in the "unity" of the wills that is the child, but the *Bildung* to be derived from this "commonality" thinks the "common" as intersubjective, not embodied in a single being. Novalis wants to think the "common" as the complete congruence of the two individuals, and yet he cannot (or better: he cannot want to) allow that "common" to ossify into a single common thing. The very image Novalis uses to suggest a utopian politics is in constant danger of a relapse into the language of apologia and absolutism, in the guise of the single sovereign as a result of the unification of the royal couple's wills.

"Generation" and parenthood in general are emphatically biologized both in *Glaube und Liebe* and in Novalis' other aphoristic works from the period, because Novalis cannot allow the symbolic first couple to have anything but biological offspring. One of the most striking facets of Novalis' model is the fact that the sovereign couple (as "symbol" or "idea" rather than biological entity) is childless: the king is a father, but the citizens are not his children. At some point, Novalis compares the king to a "father" who ought not to show preferences for one child over the other³¹—but the "children" in this case are different *activities* of the king's subjects, not the subjects themselves: "[The king] should not simply have military friends and adjutants." As for the queen, she runs a "model [*Muster*]" of familial life, an absolute *oikos*, but she is never appealed to as anybody's mother other than the next sovereign (if this is how we choose to read "primitive choice"). Novalis sees king and queen centrally as husband and wife, but he does not seem to see them as father and mother of their subjects.

The relation between the king and queen on the one hand and their subjects on the other is not structured by a paternalistic metaphor, but

³¹ Novalis, *HKA*, 2: 496.

rather by an explicitly symbolic relation. To construct this symbolic or analogic relation is precisely the job of the poet. Only by his analogizing “language of tropes and riddles” does the poetic state, which is in some absolute sense already real, come to be *wirklich*, efficacious or sensible. But, we might add, given the figurative childlessness of the (actually quite productive) Friedrich Wilhelm and Luise, it also seems to be the job of the poet to keep the royal marriage in the figurative realm, to safeguard that the trope remains contained and does not enslave the people as its symbolic children.

Friedrich Schlegel

As the previous sections have shown, the critiques of Enlightenment and French Revolution prevalent among the early Romantics in many respects parallel those of Maistre and Bonald. However, the early Romantics were initially quite taken with the Revolution, and if ambivalence increasingly slipped into their positions, it did so only gradually. Their stance vis-à-vis the Enlightenment was more complicated still. Romantic and Idealist thought is explicitly critical of Enlightenment rationality. However, as Dieter Henrich has shown, the Jena circle remained just leery of a fideism that reintroduced revealed truth into the critical philosophy, and they latched on to Fichte’s philosophy so decisively precisely because it promised a way of avoiding both Kantian dualism and simplistic fideism. As the example of Novalis demonstrates, the early Romantics were still quite far away from the kinds of position advocated by French counterrevolutionary thought. In the subsequent decades, however, many members of the early Romantic circles who outlived Novalis (who died in early 1801), began moving in the direction of Maistre and Bonald.

This transition is particularly obscured by the fact that German Romanticism shares at least one central feature of Catholic counterrevolutionary thought in France from its very inception, one that made Maistre and Bonald, rather than, say, Burke, apt models for mystically minded German thinkers—namely the rejection of liberalism. While the traditionalism of Schlegel’s Vienna years might be mistaken for a cognate of Burke’s reliance on tradition, it lacks any of Burke’s utilitarian or pragmatic assumptions. The Holy Roman Empire derives its positive role in the history of Europe not from the collective weight of centuries-old wisdom, but instead quite simply from the fact that it is

absolute. As Jean-Yves Pranchère has suggested, the Burckian option was not realistically available in states like France and Austria where the traditional balance of classes and authorities had never attained the stability of England's institutions, and was instead skewed towards one central power.³² In such a situation, only justifying that central power directly could vindicate the whole.

In this, the ideological demands of the day coincided almost uncannily with the Romantic propensity for organicist thinking, which likewise abhorred the careful calibration of particulars and instead always proceeded from the assumption that "the Whole is the True." In particular Friedrich Schlegel's central preoccupations remained astonishingly constant, given the series of religious political about-faces he performed in the early years of the century. The young man who had been a radical free thinker in the 1790s, shrouded in political and erotic scandal, gradually became something of a court philosopher for the Hapsburg monarchy in what was arguably its most repressive phase. And yet, the young Schlegel had turned to the frothy erotics of *Lucinde* (1799) for much the same reasons as the older Schlegel would turn to the Hapsburg monarchy—love, as he puts it in his *Philosophische Vorlesungen* (1830) in the first decade of the nineteenth century: "love ... is an anticipation of universal plenitude as well as the recollection of an infinite unity."³³ It is the return to such unity that the young Schlegel seeks in quasi-religious erotic unification, and the older Schlegel seeks in an empire united in one sovereign.

Schlegel seems to have taken Maistre as essentially a philosopher of religion, or, more precisely a theoretician of the relation between philosophy and revelation. Accordingly, his remarks on Maistre tend to focus on the *Considérations sur la France* (1797) and especially *Du pape* (1819). In Schlegel's *Geschichte der Alten und Neuen Literatur*, published in 1815 and dedicated to Metternich, Schlegel praises Maistre as a defender of religious revelation over and against the encroachments of corrosive Enlightenment reason. Drawing on his own earlier critique of abstract or pure understanding, Schlegel claims that philosophy by itself cannot answer the most foundational questions of human

³² Jean-Yves Pranchère, "The Social Bond according to the Catholic Counter-revolution: Maistre and Bonald," in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Richard Lebrun (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 190–1.

³³ Friedrich Schlegel, *Philosophische Vorlesungen aus den Jahren 1804 bis 1806* (Bonn: Eduard Weber, 1837), 2: 76.

existence. However, he gives this critique a decidedly fideistic turn that was lacking in the early Romantic positions of his years in Jena and Berlin. In his *Philosophische Vorlesungen*, given in Cologne between 1804 and 1806, that is, prior to his conversion to Catholicism, Schlegel had already made this central transition. Rather than giving moral law a basis in the absolute, it now had a basis in religion and “morality cannot be science [*Wissenschaft*] in a restricted sense, because its principle, the moral law, as the will of God relies is accessible to faith alone and can only partially be cognized philosophically.”³⁴ The prime locus where the two commingle is the family, in particular marriage, where “positive law is not supposed to cancel out [*aufheben*] the law of nature [*Naturrecht*], but instead just modify it.”³⁵

In his *Philosophische Vorlesungen*, Schlegel is concerned with morality rather than politics, and thus follows his late friend Novalis in essentially reducing the family to the married couple. Unlike Novalis, however, Schlegel seems to divvy up the two features that Novalis attributes to his royal couple, the fact that they “become one,” and that they are yet relational and differentiated, handing the unification aspect to the “law of nature” and the division to “the artificial and complicated conditions of bourgeois life.”³⁶ While Schlegel’s lecture is primarily concerned with questions of law and property rather than the heady metaphysics of *Faith and Love*, this divvying up hints at the fact that it is modern bourgeois life that creates differentiation, whereas religion is (in the etymology of Schlegel’s erstwhile roommate Schleiermacher) a *re-ligio*, a re-connecting or mending of such divisions. After all, what Schlegel calls the “law of nature” in this dichotomy turns out again and again to be in fact a divine command. For instance, he repeats a notorious Fichtean assertion—that philosophy can divine no legal ground for which to prohibit incestuous unions. However, he makes clear, this is only true of philosophy—here “ethical and religious grounds” intervene and prohibit what philosophy is powerless to stop.

As the example of incest makes clear, Schlegel is fully explicit about the fact that this means that much of moral law is very much accessible to reason, even if its ultimate ground or license is not. It is in delimiting this “partial cognition” of the moral law by philosophy that Schlegel turns to Maistre. In Lecture XIV, Schlegel holds up Maistre as precisely

³⁴ Ibid., 2: 255.

³⁵ Ibid., 2: 350.

³⁶ Ibid., 2: 353.

sidestepping Haller's straightforward opposition of (philosophical) "science" (what Haller would call *Philosophismus*) and religious revelation. Schlegel points out that this blunt juxtaposition was characteristic not just of theological thinkers, but of their targets as well. Kant, after all, attempted to "base the law of faith on the annihilation of all science," by locating the ground of ethics outside the purview of the categories of the understanding, except he did so "from a metaphysical point of view" rather than a religious one.³⁷ Maistre, Schlegel asserts, "is nearer to the goal," which is nothing short of a reconciliation of reason and religion; moreover, Maistre recognizes that this means conceiving of reason and philosophy differently ("sound philosophy"³⁸), something Bonald fails to do because "he altogether desires to subject Christianity to the reasoning and argumentative faculties."³⁹

What is striking about both this characterization and the evaluation of different currents of counter-revolutionary thought is its continuity with the socially revolutionary writings of the young Romantics in the 1790s. There is the emphasis on a unity of philosophy and some kind of pre-existing ground, and the attack on any kind of philosophy that relies on an organizing "dualism." Doctrinaire, unabashedly one-sided, Maistre's thought is the very definition of what the Idealists derided as "standpoint philosophy" (though the term itself is a somewhat Hegelian coinage)—philosophy that chooses its principle and posits it as beyond either critique or vindication. And yet Schlegel here turns Maistre here into a philosopher of unity and totality. In that respect, it is fascinating to see Haller come in (however implicitly) for the same criticism as Kant—it seems difficult to imagine two less compatible thinkers. And yet, Schlegel faults both equally for undialectically opposing reason and faith, albeit for very different reasons. The aim of philosophy is to comprehend both at once, and neither at the exclusion of the other.

For Schlegel, Maistre is thus a philosopher of unification much like the theological foundation of marriage, he effects a *re-ligio*, bringing together something that sundered during the Enlightenment, namely reason and faith. It is precisely such a re-unification that the concept of "nation" performs in the same lectures: through it, "positive law returns [*zurückkehrt*] to natural law" like a prodigal son. In order to achieve

³⁷ Friedrich Schlegel, *Lectures on the History of Literature, Ancient and Modern* (London: Bell and Sons, 1896), 323.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 325.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 328.

such a “highest unity,” the mixed form of the family must be expanded in much the same way Maistre proposes: The “absolute unity” of the family has a tendency to seclude it from others, which is a “telluric imperfection” that must be worked away as the family “transcends [its] narrow circle.” In principle, the nation “is an all-encompassing family,”⁴⁰ and its *telos* in working away the residual membranes of the family is complete universality. While the Schlegel of 1806 still regards the attempt to “blend together different nations in one state” by fiat as against nature—only a few years later, he will identify the project of the Hapsburg Empire precisely as an instance of an “all-encompassing” unity that no longer knows any outside.

Novalis had inscribed doubleness and relationality into the very heart of the “absolute” (rather than absolutist) state. The family, far from being the metaphor that guided the concentration of power in the monarch, provided the model for a sovereign that could never be at one with itself and whose self-relation modeled the relationship to his citizens. In Schlegel’s early writings, such as his novel *Lucinde*, he had deployed the family (or, more specifically, the married couple) in much the same way. By 1806, Schlegel was well under way to a different understanding—the “transcendence” of family into state involves ever-greater unification. The bipolarity of Novalis’ poetic kingdom is nowhere to be found. The shift coincides with Schlegel’s reception of Maistre and to a lesser extent Bonald. Friedrich Schlegel’s path to Vienna, it turned out, went through St. Petersburg.

Franz von Baader

Matters rest quite differently with Franz von Baader. Unlike the late Schlegel, Baader was not a convert to Catholicism, born instead into a solidly Catholic family in Munich. His influences ranged from the seventeenth-century mystic Jakob Böhme, the French Mason Louis Claude de Saint Martin (a decisive influence on Maistre as well) and Baader’s friend and sometime colleague Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. His attachment to the latter notwithstanding Baader considered himself an opponent of what came to be known as German Idealism, and was particularly ambivalent about Hegel.

⁴⁰ Schlegel, *Philosophische Vorlesungen aus den Jahren 1804 bis 1806*, 2: 357.

Baader was unique among the philosophers associated with the different German Romantic circles in his sustained engagement with Joseph de Maistre. However, the Maistre he read was a different one from the one Schlegel referred to in his lectures. His Maistre was a philosopher of nature; where Schlegel saw in Maistre a theorist striving to unite philosophy and revelation, Baader understood him as trying to reconcile divine providence and natural history. Accordingly, where Schlegel tended to cite the *Considérations* and *Du pape*, Baader's main interest rested with *Les soirées de Saint Petersbourg*—and even in reading Maistre's *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, Baader seemed to take the *le principe générateur* more seriously than the *constitutions politiques*. Again and again, Baader frames his (by and large approving) citations from and references to Maistre in biological language.

The second notebook of Baader's *Fermenta cognitionis* (written around 1822) is organized almost entirely around Maistre's *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (1814). And yet most readers of Maistre would be quite surprised by the topics dealt with in Baader's brief and often epigrammatic notes. Nevertheless, these are not fragments, but instead constitute a sustained, if at times elliptical, line of argumentation. That line of argumentation shares many of Maistre's central presuppositions (and Maistre comes in for almost exclusively positive mentions in the *Fermenta cognitionis*), but brings them to bear on a dizzying array of topics—above all questions of erotic philosophy. Much like Maistre, Baader inveighs against those philosophers who, in accounting for the organization of a state, would take the individual as their starting point. And much like Maistre, this kind of philosophical egoism, the addiction to "I-ness [*Ichheit*]" not only conceals the true nature of social life, but inevitably leads to ethical lapse as well. In the vein of Novalis, Baader valorizes love, the feeling of unity with another or the feeling that unites a political unit, over the kind of constitution that plays single atomistic actors off against one another in a mechanistic fashion.

In Maistre, familial cohesion was the irreducible remainder of the providential in human affairs. It was the *a priori* referred-ness of each individual to a familial context that clearly doomed any attempt to turn mothers and father, sons and daughter, brothers and sisters into "males and females," as Bonald put it. Any attempt to "mechanize" and "abstract" their relations was bound to lead into error and indeed unethical life. Baader goes further than even Novalis in Platonizing this

anti-mechanistic theory of familial cohesion. Influenced by Jakob Boehme, François Hemsterhuis, and Saint Martin, Baader reads mechanistic isolation as a lapse from an original, Adamic unity—a combination of Aristophanes story of the androgynous superbeings in Plato's *Symposium* and the Biblical story of the Fall of Man. Indeed, what is providentially given in Baader is nothing short of unity, the totality of existence—a unity embodied in the holy trinity (which “unites without collapsing” the individual, the universal and the particular⁴¹) and in true monarchy, in which the sovereign unites in his *pluralis maiestate* “the ideal connection of the One (the national unity) with the individual monarch.”⁴²

While Baader's Hegelian language and metaphysical baggage would probably have struck both Maistre and Bonald as strange, Baader's defense of the monarchy as an embodiment of a greater whole would not have been foreign to them in the least. However, Baader follows up these remarks on Maistre with a detailed and on first glance incongruous account of sexual difference and reproduction. In general, he argues that it is not individuals that reproduce themselves in reproduction, but that instead, through their *fluidum*, it is the species that regenerates itself through the partners. It is clear that this note is meant to still address Maistre, since Baader's copy of the *Soirées* includes a very similar observation in the marginalia: “Numerical procreation needs to be distinguished. Not the particular father multiplies in the particular seed, but rather the same *unité*, which reproduces both father and son.”⁴³ This physical-biological *unité*, this species-essence is then determined in a process of negation from a universal into an individual child. It is this “negation from [universal] seed to [individual] creature,”⁴⁴ Baader claims, that reenacts upon the creature the heredity of sin. It is in this sense that Baader interprets a claim one of Maistre's disputants makes in the *Soirées*, namely that “vice separates men, just as virtue unites them.”⁴⁵ Sin is the process of diremption from the totality, virtue is the recognition of the Whole as True. Behavior with a view to the hypostatized individual is sin, behavior with a view to a whole of which the individual actor is only a part is virtue.

⁴¹ Franz von Baader, *Sämmtliche Werke* (Leipzig: Bethmann, 1851), 2: 205.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴³ 14: 388.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 2: 219.

⁴⁵ Maistre, *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, trans. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal & Kingston, McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993), 293.

Throughout the *Fermenta*, Baader cites Maistre, but reinterprets him in terms of Jakob Böhme. The result is an emphasis on a nature mysticism of a kind that is not found in Maistre. At times, this requires Baader to twist Maistre's arm, all the while he is praising him. Citing the *Considérations sur la France*, Baader quotes Maistre's claim that the misfortunes of the French clergy during the Revolution "will produce the kind of exaltation that raises men above themselves and make them capable of accomplishing great things."⁴⁶ In Maistre's *Considérations* this "exaltation" expresses nothing but a hope that the clergy castigated by the Revolution might emerge stronger when shorn of its corrupt and materialist element. The clergy, contented and fattened by centuries of graft and simony, once shorn of its overly material character, is ready to transcend itself and "accomplish great things." Baader's reading takes the shedding of material shackles quite differently—it represents not a relinquishing of earthly possessions, but the wholesale departure from the *principium individuationis* itself. And it is not the revolution that causes such departure—it is instead self-transcendence in love. Baader glosses Maistre's passage in terms of "physical generation, which happens only through a kind of ecstasy," and love, "which alone is productive" and preexists the particular lovers generatively unified in it.⁴⁷

While Maistre himself certainly is not opposed to such speculation, Baader can seem excessively selective and somewhat misleading in citing Maistre, which makes it useful to follow along as Baader reads an actual text of Maistre. While references to Maistre are littered throughout Baader's notebooks and fragment collections, there exists also a complete list of marginalia from Baader's copy of the *Soirées*. Baader evidently read the text in French (in the two-volume 1822 edition) with great interest, but almost all of his extensive glosses and marginalia seem to pertain to matters of natural theosophy. Baader pulls from Maistre's text a biological theory of politics—even if he has to read Maistre quite obliquely to do so.

In keeping with the overall project of the text, "justifying divine providence in this life,"⁴⁸ rather than the afterlife, the first dialogue of the *Soirées* deals with the existence of evil as a "great scandal to human

⁴⁶ Maistre, *Considerations on France*, 20.

⁴⁷ Franz von Baader, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 2: 209.

⁴⁸ Maistre, *St. Petersburg Dialogues*, 9.

reason.”⁴⁹ Baader’s comments consist primarily of excerpted quotations and brief objections. His interest is piqued only by the footnotes that expand the concept of sin and evil into the biological realm. The note in which Baader glosses Maistre’s claim that “no illness is known to have a physical cause,”⁵⁰ makes this particularly clear. The Count’s assertion in the passage the footnote refers to is simply that physical illness is punishment for evil deeds—that a world without the latter, would almost certainly be without the former. One is the consequence or the sign of the other. Baader however glosses as follows: “All *morbis*,” he notes (a word he glosses as meaning “evil”) is “the cancellation of unity (middle, limit).” This note seems to imply that *morbis* is not a sign or consequence of sin, but rather constitutes sin. And indeed the description that he offers for *morbis*, that of a “cancellation of unity,” is indeed close enough to Baader’s frequent descriptions of sin and evil. In other words, Baader almost reverses the “relationship between the morally good and the naturally good”—one is not the outward symptom of the other; the two are rather one and the same.⁵¹

What is striking about Baader’s comments is the fact that, just as Schlegel uses Maistre to reverse early Romantic ideas about the relationship between philosophy and revelation, Baader seizes onto Maistre’s *Soirées* to turn on their head early Romantic pantheism. For the early Romantics, and to some extent for the younger Baader himself, nature had provided a model for unity, one that had been cleaved apart by the human understanding and that could be restored only through a poeticization, magicalization, or aestheticization of life, depending on which Romantic one asked. When purged of the mechanistic excesses of the Enlightenment, human faculties can reattain that unity and coherence that is required and indeed called for by the all-encompassing unity of nature. His remarks on Maistre’s *Soirées* reverse this idea: nature is a guide not towards unity, but towards division, a lure towards a particularization that is ultimately identical with sin and evil.

In one the *Fermenta*’s most fascinating passages, Baader cites approvingly Maistre’s claim that “what is most fundamental in the laws of a nation cannot be written [*ne sauroit être écrit*],” and he adds that the

⁴⁹ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 23.

⁵¹ Franz von Baader, *Sämmtliche Werke*, 2: 221.

English constitution "is really more of a result of a political Catholicism, rather than a political Protestantism, insofar as the latter represents the attempt to silence by way of writing all tradition (the living word)."⁵² And he holds up as ultimate anathema Thomas Payne's assertion that a true constitution has to be able to fit in one's pocket. While Novalis' poetic state similarly rejects the written constitution as a mere formula of the machine-state, the actual configuration of his state relies quite heavily on signification, most centrally in the royal couple. The laws of the poetic state may not be able to be written, but they can be represented, in fact the state organizes itself around a series of mutual representations. Baader's defense of "political Catholicism," which relies only on "the living word," on the other hand, is clearly going in a different direction.⁵³ Novalis secularized a number of Pietist protestant doctrines into a self-sustaining metaphysics of sovereignty; Baader and Schlegel reverse this development, drawing from the philosophemes of *Frühromantik* into a full-fledged political theology.

Conclusion

Robert Triomphe's generally acute assessment of a French Reaction as the "frère jumeau" of emergent German Romanticism both overplays and underplays this link. To hear him tell the story, Romanticism as such emerged from much the same intellectual constellation (which he dubs "crypto-Catholicism") as that of the Counter-revolution. While initially contacts were rare, or tended to run from Germany to Savoy (and later Petersburg), the Maistre-reception among the Romantics eventually intensified due to their pre-existing kinship. In the foregoing pages, I have attempted to sketch a different picture: the German reception of Maistre in what we today call 'early' Romanticism (roughly from the publication of Fichte's *Die Wissenschaftslehre* in 1794 to the dissolution of the Jena-circle in the early years of the nineteenth century) was negligible, and insofar as the young Romantics seem to have been aware of the positions of the French Reaction, they tried to side-step them. Repulsed by the excesses of the Revolution, skeptical about

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ However, he castigates Maistre for allowing the constitution no written aspect at all—written constitutions are the necessary declensions of the extra-linguistic that subtends them, and as such are entirely necessary.

the philosophical tools furnished by the Enlightenment, they remained committed to the ideals of the French Revolution.

This may seem to downplay Maistre's impact on Romanticism, but it appears that Maistre actually had a far greater agency in molding the fate of German Romanticism than Triomphe allows him. At least partially under the impression of Maistre, the Romantics came to rethink and to a large extent rescind their earlier positions—what they had sought to sidestep in their early years now steered them in a new, far more conservative direction. The family and its relationship to the state is only one case in point in this transition, but it is an important one. In Novalis, the familial organization of the state, with its emphasis on irreducible relationality and an ineluctably semiotic character of familial arrangements, precluded any straightforward political theology. In the later accounts of Schlegel and Baader, family and love are precisely supports for such a political theology. The state is nothing but the extension of the family, and erotic love is the means of its extension towards the infinite. Where for Maistre and Bonald, it is the family's organization through power that makes it an appropriate model for the state, for Schlegel and Baader it is its organization by love—especially Baader essentially presents an eroticized version of the doctrine of the divine origin of royal sovereignty. This makes clear how close 'late' Romantic positions were to those of Maistre—*pace* Triomphe, their respective positions did not start out as fraternal twins, but grew into an almost intimate relationship.

MAISTRIAN THEMES IN WALTER BENJAMIN'S SOCIOLOGY

Ryohei Kageura

Introduction¹

The aim of this article is to shed some light on Joseph de Maistre's influence on Walter Benjamin. This is not an easy task, because the latter never devoted any work to the former. However, in his essay *Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire* (1938), Benjamin mentions Maistre as such: "Belief in original sin protected him [Baudelaire] from believing in the knowledge of human nature. He shared this opinion with Joseph de Maistre, who, for his part, had united the study of dogma with that of Bacon."² This tells us that Benjamin had at least read one of Maistre's most important works: *L'Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*. It can be said that Benjamin was directly influenced by this work, because Maistre's anti-Baconian idea is a key element of his text on Baudelaire (as we will see in the following section). Now, in 1938, the same year in which he wrote his essay on Baudelaire, Benjamin cited Maistre in a personal letter to his friend Gershom Scholem: "There is no one, says Joseph de Maistre, who cannot be won over by moderating his advice."³ He wrote this letter on 12 June 1938, while he was composing his essay on Baudelaire from April to the end of September in the same year. The letter enables us to assume that, in 1938, Benjamin was endeavouring to read Maistre's works in order to write his essay on Baudelaire.

Moreover, Benjamin mentions Maistre in his essay entitled *Critique théologique* (1931). This text would provide a clue to clarifying Benjamin's interpretation of Maistre. The essay enables us to conclude

¹ This article was translated from French by Richard A. Lebrun.

² Walter Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire" (1938), *Charles Baudelaire: Un poète lyrique à l'apogée du capitalisme*, trans. from German with a preface by Jean Lacoste, according to the original edition established by Rolf Tiedemann (Paris: Payot, 1990, 62; *Gesammelte Schriften* [henceforth GS] I, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), 542.

³ Benjamin, *Correspondance 1929–1940*, trans. from German by Guy Petitdemange (Paris: Aubier Montaigne, 1979), 248.

that Benjamin considers Maistre as a thinker who interprets modernity in a theological manner. In his *Critique théologique*, Benjamin comments on Willy Haas' work entitled *Gestalten der Zeit*, in which the latter speaks about Franz Kafka and Hugo von Hofmannsthal. Benjamin appreciates Haas well and he considers him a 'disciple' of Joseph de Maistre: "In any case, Haas, the editor of a left-leaning weekly in the daily struggle of literature, is as a researcher, a disciple of Adam Müller, Burke, or Maistre rather than Voltaire, Gutzkow or Lasalle."⁴ Benjamin understood Haas' work as follows: "The main reason for this study is that theological understanding of works is the proper interpretation of their political meaning as well as their modern [*modischen*], economic, and metaphysical meaning."⁵ This also means that this is the way Benjamin understands Joseph de Maistre. In other words, for Benjamin, Maistre's work consisted in interpreting modern things in a theological way. From this, one could say that Benjamin was interested in Maistre, despite being a Marxist who hoped for the Revolution, because the axis of his thought is to elucidate the theological in modernity.

The relationship between modernity and theology is the central interest in Benjamin's own reflections. Here, the question concerns the loss of theological authority in modernity and of the theological solution to this loss. In *Erfahrung und Armut* (1933), he emphasises the impoverishment of the experience of modern men. Experience is a key notion that appears in his many works and that he sees as being related to the concepts of religious authority and intersubjectivity. Technological progress deprives the Catholic Church of authority and since Kant the idea of the Enlightenment has separated religious knowledge from the subject of knowledge (*noumenon*).⁶ In addition, according to Benjamin, the First World War declared that technological progress managed to annihilate experience insofar as experience is linked to religion and truth. Benjamin describes the phenomena that occurred after the war in this way:

This frightful deployment of technology plunged men into a totally new poverty. The reverse side of this was the oppressing profusion of ideas that was created among people (or rather: that spread through them):

⁴ Benjamin, "Theologisch Kritik, Zu Willy Haas 'Gestalten der Zeit' (1931), *GS III*, 278.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 277.

⁶ On the Benjaminian critique of Kant, see "Sur le programme de la philosophie qui vient."

the revival of astrology and yoga, Christian Science and chiromancy, vegetarianism and gnosis, scholasticism, and spiritualism. For it was not so much an authentic revival as a galvanisation that occurred here. ... In effect, what is our cultural patrimony worth, if we do not hold onto it, precisely, by the bonds of experience?⁷

In modernity, there is no authority acting as an intermediary of all ideas that can point out the universal idea for all men. Consequently, modernity suffers from a profusion of incompatible ideas. Modernity consists in a relativist vision of the world, which allows each idea to be opposed to others. Despite this, Benjamin does not in any way insist either on the rejection of modernity or the anachronistic reestablishment of authority.

The poverty of experience: this does not mean that men aspire to a new experience. No, they aspire to freeing themselves from every experience whatever it may be; they aspire to an environment in which their poverty is valued, exterior and finally also interior, to affirm it so clearly that it is in some way something valuable.⁸

The task of modern men is not to reinvent a new authority to take the place of the past authority of the Catholic Church, but to obtain "something valuable" from relativist modernity.

However, this does not imply the withdrawal of religion or theology. For Benjamin, this 'something of value' is conceivable within the theological schema. It appears in the form of redemption: Modern men must be the "confessors [*Bekenner*] of a new poverty,"⁹ and in their eyes "a new existence appears as a redemption [*erlösend*] that in every circumstance is sufficient in itself in the most simple and at the same time the most comfortable way."¹⁰ Therefore what Benjamin seeks is redemption within modernity, in other words a theology that corresponds to modernity. Not only does he seek this reason for theology in modernity in his work *Erfahrung und Armut* (1933), but also in his other works. Particularly in his last work, *Über den Begriff der Geschichte* (1940), he presents his theological ideas of the "Angel of History" and

⁷ Walter Benjamin, "Expérience et pauvreté" (1933), *Œuvres II*, trans. Maurice de Gandillac, Rainer Rochlitz, and Pierre Ruchlitz (Paris, Gallimard, 2000), 365–366; *GS II*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and Hermann Schweppenhäuser (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1991), 214–15.

⁸ *Ibid.* 371, *GS II*, 218. Translation modified.

⁹ *Ibid.* 369, *GS II*, 217. Translation modified.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 372, *GS II*, 218. Translation modified.

the marionette called “historical materialism” that “takes theology to its service.”¹¹ Joseph de Maistre would inevitably be a point of reference to him, because he tried to interpret modernity in a theological manner. This article therefore aims to clarify the relationship between Maistre and Benjamin’s theological interpretations of modernity. This will not only facilitate an understanding of the relationship between Maistre’s ideas and those of Benjamin, but it will also improve the understanding of Benjamin’s thought.

However, Benjamin has no work devoted to Joseph de Maistre. Thus, in order to reflect on the reception of Maistrian ideas in Benjamin’s thought, this article attempts to study this through his interpretation of Baudelaire. It is very well known that the latter considered himself to be Joseph de Maistre’s disciple, by declaring that Maistre had been able to teach him to “reason.”¹² Benjamin was Baudelaire’s translator. He published the German translation of Baudelaire’s *Tableaux parisiens* in 1923. He also planned to devote three works to Baudelaire: *Paris, capital du XIXe siècle* (1935), *Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire* (1938), and *Sur quelques thèmes baudelairiens* (1939). With respect to the relationship between Benjamin and Maistre, it appears that *Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire* is especially important, because, as we have seen in the beginning, Benjamin explicitly mentions Maistre in this work. This article aims to demonstrate that Benjamin approaches Joseph de Maistre’s thought through Baudelaire. By clarifying the indirect influence of Maistre on Benjamin through Baudelaire, we should be able to shed light on the relationship between their ideas on the theology of modernity.

1. The Link between the Benjaminian Idea of the Detective Novel and Maistre’s Anti-Baconian Idea

This section attempts to demonstrate that Benjamin links the Maistrian idea of original guilt to the mutual mistrust of modern men. For this, we will firstly follow the general lines of the text *Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire*. The aim of this text is to sociologically define the masses as a modern social phenomenon by reading Baudelaire.

¹¹ Walter Benjamin, “Sur le concept d’histoire” (1940), *Œuvres III*, 428; *GS I*, 693.

¹² Baudelaire, “Mon cœur mis à nu,” *Œuvres*, ed. Yves-Gérard Le Dantec (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), 1234.

At the time, Benjamin considered the appearance of a new genre of literature to be an essential phenomenon of modern times: the detective novel. The detective novel cannot exist without the human condition of modern life, that is, the presence of the masses. Benjamin believes that Maistre's anti-Baconian idea emerges from this human condition in the form of a reaction against it. With respect to this human condition, Benjamin refers to a sociological analysis by George Simmel on life in a large city:

He who sees without hearing is much more confused, much more perplexed, more anxious than he who hears without seeing. There must be some kind of significant factor here for the sociology of the big city. The relations of men, in large cities... are characterised by the marked dominance of sight over hearing. This... is above all as a result of the means of public transport. Before the development of the bus, the railroad, and the tramways in the nineteenth century, people did not have the possibility or the obligation to look at each other for minutes or hours without speaking to each other.¹³

In other words, before modern times, people lived in small communities and they spoke whenever they saw each other. Under these circumstances, everybody knew each another and there could be no secrets between them. However, modernity increases the mobility of people and the concentration of population in large cities. This forces us to meet many more people than before. At the same time, it implies that in large cities, we must always see crowds, that is, a multitude of people who do not know one another and can no longer recognise each other. Thus, the increase of human encounters in the city does not lead to the enrichment of human relations, but rather to the isolation of each individual. Isolation within the masses is a fundamental experience of modern life. The concentration of the population in a single place leads to the insensitive isolation of each individual within his particular interests. So each individual appears to be a mystery to others, which is an important element for the detective novel.

However, according to Benjamin, this constant meeting with secret people alone does not explain the emergence of the detective novel. Another element is also required: the feeling that others are dangerous. So Benjamin considers the "stroller" and the 'physiologies' as the

¹³ Georg Simmel, *Mélange de philosophie relativiste. Contribution à la culture philosophique*, trans. A. Guillaumin (Paris: F. Alcan, 1912), 26–7, cited by Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire" (1938), *Charles Baudelaire*, 59; GS I, 539–40.

antipodes of the detective novel. The stroller is the kind of man who loved to stroll through the Parisian alleys during the first half of the nineteenth century, whereas the 'physiologies' are a kind of writing that was fashionable, also during the first half of the nineteenth century. They describe all the characters of Parisian life. According to Benjamin, both the stroller and the 'physiologies' serve to ease people's concerns about mutual isolation. They are characterised by familiarity. Thus everything exterior appears familiar to them. For the stroller, the alleys are completely familiar. "The stroller feels at home within this world."¹⁴ What the stroller does in the alleys is:

to transform the boulevard into an interior. The street becomes an apartment for the stroller, who is at home between the facades of buildings like the bourgeois between his four walls. He attributes the same value to the shiny enamel plaques on which the names of companies are written as the bourgeois attributes to the oil paintings in his living room. The walls are the desks upon which he rests his notebook, the newspaper kiosks serve as his bookshelves and cafe terraces are the bow windows from which he contemplates his interior after work.¹⁵

All these things in the streets thus become components of the interior for the stroller. The same applies for the "physiologies." The 'physiologies' provide the readers with the same image of men. All the figures described by the 'physiologies' are harmless and perfectly good-natured. As Benjamin says: "In fact, the most obvious thing to do is to give people a pleasant image of each other. The writers of physiologies thus contribute in their way to the phantasmagoria of Parisian life."¹⁶ Hence the writers of 'physiologies' affirm the goodness of men, which enables them to get along with strangers. Besides this, they have another tendency. They assert the ability of nineteenth-century physiognomists, the ability of deciphering the nature of passers-by on the street: "They claim that without worrying about precise knowledge, anybody is capable of fathoming the profession, personality, origin, and the lifestyle of passers-by."¹⁷ If everybody possessed this deciphering ability, life in the big city would no longer be worrisome, because there could be no secrets between us, just like before modernity. In any case, the 'physiologies' consist in removing worrisome ideas from modern life. They

¹⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 57; *Gesammelte Schriften I*, 538.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 58; *GS I*, 539.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 60; *GS I*, 541.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 61; *GS I*, 541.

consist in the trust or the intropathy felt towards the strangers that one comes across in the city. The standpoint of the stroller and the 'physiologies' is considered as the anti-Baconian reaction against the human condition of modern life. The anti-Baconianism of the stroller and of the 'physiologies' will be discussed in more depth later on.

The detective novel cannot come to life purely with the stroller and the "physiologies." The second element required by the detective novel is anxiety or mistrust towards strangers. This anxiety or mistrust, which the stroller and the 'physiologies' try to protect themselves from, corresponds exactly to the human condition of modern life. The detective novel is not based on the 'physiological' typology of men, but rather on the fact that the criminal can hide among the masses:

The determination of types is of little importance to it; rather it studies the functions of the masses in the big city. Among these, one draws the attention, as was already emphasised in a police reports towards the beginning of the nineteenth century: "It will always be almost impossible to revive and maintain good morals in an accumulated population where each individual, so to speak, unknown to everyone else, hides in the crowd and is never embarrassed under the gaze of anyone." The mass appears here as the asylum that protects the social misfit from his pursuers.¹⁸

According to Benjamin, "the primordial social content of the detective novel is the removal of the traces of the individual in the crowd of the big city."¹⁹ Mistrust towards strangers thus characterises the crowd in the big city and the mistrust corresponds to the Baconian idea that Maistre criticises. In other words, Benjamin considers that the Maistrian idea is likely to criticise modernity. The Baconian nature of mistrust of the masses will be discussed in more detail later.

Why does Benjamin reflect at the same time on the detective novel and on Baudelaire, who has never written one? It is because Baudelaire's thought fits this second element of the detective novel. For Baudelaire, the optimistic ideas of the stroller and of the 'physiologies' are nothing but phantasmagorias. All the passers-by in the street appear guilty to Edgar Allan Poe's translator, to Baudelaire. He expresses his belief in original sin by saying: "Not to forget the most important thing,/We saw everywhere, without seeking it,/From the foot to the top of the fatal

¹⁸ Ibid., 62–63; *GS I*, 542.

¹⁹ Ibid., 67; *GS I*, 546.

ladder / The wearisome spectacle of immortal sin.”²⁰ Benjamin considers that his belief in original sin separates him from the stroller and the “physiologies.” “His belief in original sin protected him from believing in knowledge of human nature. He shared this opinion with Maistre.”²¹ Here there is an apparent intersection between Benjamin’s sociology and Maistre’s theology. According to Benjamin, the theology of original sin is a condition for the detective novel. Modern men, who accept the detective novel, must internalise belief in original sin. Modernity does not free them from the idea of original sin, but it makes them internalise the idea.

Benjamin relates the Maistrian idea of original sin to the mistrust of the “physiological” capacity to decipher the nature of the other, that is to say, to the mistrust of the reciprocal communicativeness of men among the masses. The “physiological” capacity to decipher human nature is no more than a phantasmagoria. Benjamin then links this deciphering ability with Bacon’s “Idols of the Marketplace”: “The ability for which the stroller loves to glorify himself is hence better defined as one of the idols that Francis Bacon had already established in the market.”²² According to Bacon, the idols of the marketplace or of the public space (*idola fori*) are idols related with the commerce of language among men. Even though men communicate among themselves in the public space through language, Bacon thinks that language is an obstacle that prevents us from attaining the truth. The Baconian idea of language consists in completely eliminating language from the search for truth. Bacon then insists on the arbitrary nature of language with respect to reality:

words are most imposing according to common understanding and analyse things along the lines that are most perceptible to common understanding. However a more penetrating, a more attentive observation attempts to shift these lines, so that they conform more to nature; words confront each other with much noise.²³

This means that according to the nature of man’s innate intelligence, language cuts and classifies real world phenomena, which then appear

²⁰ Baudelaire, “The Voyage,” *Selected Poems of Charles Baudelaire*, trans. Geoffrey Wagner (New York: Grove Press, 1974).

²¹ Walter Benjamin, “Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire,” *Charles Baudelaire*, 62; *GS I*, 542.

²² *Ibid.*, 62; *GS I*, 542.

²³ Francis Bacon, *Novum organum*, ed. and trans. Michel Malherbe and Jean-Marie Pousseur (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986), 119.

to man not as they are but rather arbitrarily. Language cannot grasp reality such as it is. Therefore language is a prejudice to be eliminated in the search for truth. Thus, we can think that Benjamin associates the Baconian distrust of language with distrust in the "physiological" capacity to decipher the essence of the other. In the same way that the elucidation of nature through language is purely arbitrary, the "physiological" deciphering of the nature of the other is also purely arbitrary. For Benjamin, the Baconian idea of language corresponds to the absolute incommunicability between modern men in the crowd.

Benjamin then defines Joseph de Maistre as the thinker who "combined the study of dogma and that of Bacon."²⁴ Therefore, if Joseph de Maistre is important for Benjamin, it is because the dogma of the original guilt of men and the Baconian idea of the elimination of prejudices are combined in Joseph de Maistre. In his *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, Joseph de Maistre considers Bacon as an enemy of Catholicism. Maistre finds Bacon's writings not only "incredulously anti-Christian, but also fundamentally impious and a truly materialistic."²⁵ While Benjamin focuses on the Baconian idea of language, we observe that Joseph de Maistre targets Bacon's language itself. Maistre emphasises that even Bacon's writing style is based on his idea of language. Which style of language acceptable to Bacon? It is the *material* style, because he can avoid the abuse of language as long as it contains no abstract words:

To put it bluntly, his style is *material*. It only deals with forms, masses, and motions. His thought seems, if it may be expressed in this way, to be *incorporated* and *embodied* only into the objects with which he is concerned. Any abstract expression, any intelligent *verb* that contemplates itself, displeases him. He sends back to school any idea that does not present itself to him in three dimensions. In all his works there is not a single line or word that addresses the mind. Word like *nature* or *essence*, for example, shock him. He prefers to say *form*, because he can see it. The word *prejudice* is too subtle for his ear; he will say *idol*, because an *idol* is a statue of wood, stone, or metal that has a shape, a colour, that one can touch and place on a pedestal. Instead of saying *prejudices of a nation*, *prejudices of a group*, etc., ... he will say *idols of the public space*, *idols of the tribe*, etc."²⁶

²⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 26; GS I, 542.

²⁵ Joseph de Maistre, *Un Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, *Œuvres complètes* (Lyon: Vitte et Perrussel, 1884), 6: 501.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 43

To avoid the abuse of language, Bacon abandons all abstract, intellectual, and rational expressions. Therefore Bacon's language itself is not rational, although he emphasised rationalism.

Bacon is a thinker who wanted to invent the method for excluding the intelligence that is characteristic of theology. However, this exclusive method itself is neither intellectual nor rational: "never could one imagine anything more absurd than this *method of exclusion*, nothing more contrary to the development of the human mind and to the progress of the sciences."²⁷ This is because Bacon's idea consists in excluding logical reasoning from the search for truth. Even though logical reasoning is based on access to the truth with the mediation of the sequence of its components, Bacon's idea of methodology is based on calling these components into question. These are only confusing for Bacon. Therefore his methodology, inference, stresses the immediate seizure of the truth: "judgement by inference," he says, "finds and judges what it seeks in a single act of understanding; it does not use intermediary terms; it grasps the object immediately as it arrives with the feeling, because the senses to which the initial objects are subjected judge them and deem them to be true in the same action."²⁸ For Bacon, the intermediary terms that would compose their logical linking by reasoning are no more than *prejudices* or *idols*, that is to say, obstacles to the quest for truth. However, Maistre thinks that this belief is false. One cannot immediately grasp the truth. The truth can only be discovered through logical reasoning: "If there is anything that is evident in metaphysics, it is that no truth can be discovered *by means of reasoning* alone, unless a link is found to attach it to a truth that is previously acknowledged as fact."²⁹ Reasoning discovers truth by attaching it with a logical chain to truths previously confirmed as facts. Bacon considers these to be false, because they were previously, but not currently accepted as fact. However, Maistre believes that the falsity of a prior truth reveals itself not in the intermediary of the object but in the logical link to other truths. If a prior truth appears as a contradiction in the logical chain, it is considered as a false truth to be abandoned. Therefore, even if a truth is characteristic of theology, it is not necessarily false.

²⁷ Ibid., 26.

²⁸ Ibid., 36.

²⁹ Ibid., 19.

Everything is revealed within this logical link. The Baconian idea of the abuse of language is essentially false insofar as it excludes logical reasoning itself. Thus Bacon and his distrust of language appear as the capital enemies of truth. Maistre considers the Baconian distrust of language, induction in his terms, as the representation of original sin, while he considers logical reasoning, or in his terms, syllogism, as conforming God's will.

Here, the question concerns the need for an intermediary between ideas and the truth. An idea cannot justify itself as truth if it is isolated from others. It can only do so if it is linked to others through the intermediary. However, the Enlightenment philosophy that Bacon represents suppresses this intermediary and isolates ideas. Thus we can observe that the problem that Joseph de Maistre proposes is very close to the problem of modernity that Benjamin proposes, as we have seen, in *Erfahrung und Armut*: modernity destroys experience as the intersubjective sphere that links ideas and consequently, it provokes a profusion of isolated ideas. Both Benjamin and Joseph de Maistre problematise the absence of the intermediary of ideas. Moreover, when he understands Joseph de Maistre as the thinker who combines the Baconian distrust of language with the dogma of original guilt, Benjamin combines the profusion of isolated ideas and the masses, that is, the profusion of isolated men in the big city. This profusion of isolated men is characterised by their mutual distrust and this distrust is considered as a modern form of the dogma of original guilt.

However, according to Benjamin, modernity preserves the anti-Baconian desire to re-establish the human link. The stroller is replaced by the detective in the detective novel and modern technology represents this anti-Baconian desire. The second objective of this chapter is to clarify this anti-Baconian aspect of modernity. Benjamin sees Joseph de Maistre as a thinker who wishes to resist modernity and the Baconian distrust of language, through syllogism. The "strollers" and the 'physiologies' also share this reactionary desire, because they consist in setting their trust of the masses against the mistrust of the masses. According to Benjamin, the detective novel also includes an element that corresponds to this reactionary desire: it is the detective. The detective novel first appeared in France with the translation of Edgar Allan Poe's stories: "The Mystery of Marie Roget," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," and "The Purloined Letter." They were translated by Baudelaire. However, Baudelaire never wrote a detective novel himself. Benjamin was interested in this fact. According to Benjamin, the

critical elements of the detective novel are the victim, the scene of the crime, the murder, the masses, and the detective. One can find these elements in Baudelaire's works: the victim and the scene of the crime in *Une martyre*, the murderer in *Le vin de l'assassin*, and the masses in *Le crépuscule du soir*. However, we do not find the element of the detective in his texts. Benjamin believes that this element opposed Baudelaire's thought, and that, therefore, he never wrote a detective novel: "Baudelaire did not write a detective novel because his instinctual structure made it impossible for him to identify with the detective."³⁰ His instinctual structure came from his belief in original sin; everyone is guilty. This mentality is a condition of the detective novel. However the detective opposes himself to this mentality and he embodies the reactionary mentality of the stroller, which consists in opposing himself to the mistrust of the masses, because he embodies the belief in the possibility of tracking and arresting the guilty by following their traces. As we have seen, the experience of the masses does not accept the intropathic practices of the stroller and the "physiologies." However they are not eliminated, but transformed into scientific forms. The detective is a transformed version of the stroller: "in these times of terror when each person possesses an element of the conspirator, each person equally finds himself led to play the detective. Strolling offers him the best perspectives."³¹ Thus the "physiological" capacity to decipher the essence of man is reinterpreted as the logical reasoning of the detective.

Logical reasoning connects the detective to the criminal. The interest of the detective novel resides in a logical construction. The detective novel assumes that one must be able to pursue the criminal if one reasons logically on the basis of indirect evidence. However one can also say that this assumption is yet another phantasmagoria of the stroller, because in the name of the scientific method, it assumes that one can entirely decipher the secret of the other. In referring to a plot by Alexandre Dumas, Benjamin says:

The criminological flair, combined with the pleasant nonchalance of the stroller, provides the intrigue of Alexandre Dumas' *Mohicans de Paris*. The hero of this novel decides to embark upon an adventure by following a piece of paper that was blowing in the wind. Whatever traces that the

³⁰ Walter Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 66; *GS I*, 545.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 63; *GS I*, 542–43.

stroller can follow will each lead him towards a crime. This allows to us to understand how the detective novel, an abstraction made from its cold calculations, contributes to the phantasmagoria of Parisian life. It does not yet transform the criminal, but it transforms his adversaries and in particular the hunting ground on which they pursue him."³²

The detective novel is certainly not based on the goodness of men that was stressed by the stroller and the "physiologies." Rather, the detective novel is based on the scientific method by which one pursues the criminal perfectly. By replacing the "physiological" capability of deciphering the essence of man, the logical reasoning of the detective retains the *phantasmagoria of Parisian life*, that is, the phantasmagoria of the intro-pathic stroller.

However it is not only the detective novel that is laden with reactionary phantasmagoria. It represents the reactionary desire of modern society. Mass society wants to restore the links between isolated men. This reactionary desire is fulfilled by watching over the masses. Benjamin presents some examples of the progress of social monitoring in the big city: firstly the numbering of buildings,³³ secondly, gas lighting³⁴ and thirdly, photography.³⁵ Thus mass society invents scientific techniques for monitoring and representing the masses. If there is no other means of connecting men apart from these scientific techniques, the human bond becomes entirely inhuman. These techniques do not resolve the isolation of each individual in the mass, but they facilitate the concentration of individual people. Now, the notion of interest functions in the same way. According to Benjamin, the only thing that is communicable between men in a crowd is their interests. "In practice, the increasing competition above all leads the individual to imperatively declare his interests. When evaluating the behaviour of a man, the exact knowledge of these will often be more useful than that of his essence."³⁶ Even though the declaration of interest has nothing to do with either mutual understanding or mutual trust, interest is the only language of modern men that unites them without mutual trust.³⁷ In this sense, interest represents the anti-Baconian desire of modern men. If they desire to re-establish the human bond, this re-establishment

³² Ibid., 63–4; GS I, 543.

³³ Ibid., 72; GS I, 549.

³⁴ Ibid., 76; GS I, 552.

³⁵ Ibid., 72–3; GS I, 550.

³⁶ Ibid., 63; GS I, 542.

³⁷ Ibid., 92; GS I, 565.

will therefore be conducted socially through monitoring and the maintenance of public order, and economically in the form of interests. Benjamin thus finds that in modernity, anti-Baconianism is achieved through scientific and economic forms.

The detective in the detective novel represents this reactionary desire of modern men, whereas the criminal represents the mistrust of the communicability between men. The detective novel thus describes the double face of modernity: the isolation of modern men and the reactionary desire to re-establish human bonds. This double face of modernity is then understood as the conflict between Bacon's philosophy and Maistre's anti-Baconism.

2. The Correlation Between Maistre's Providential Logic and Benjamin's Logic of the Detective Novel, Through Baudelaire's Satanism

Benjamin relates this double face of modernity to his idea of revolution. For him, the Revolution is considered as the dialectic of these two opposing elements of modernity. This consideration rests on the Baudelarian interpretation of the Revolution. This section aims to clarify the indirect influence of the Maistrian ideas of revolution and reversibility on Benjamin, through Baudelaire. For the latter, the Revolution is composed of the double face of modernity. He then interprets this double face theologically, that is, as the righteous and the guilty. The Revolution is considered as a crime that the guilty commit against the righteous. The righteous man is the victim of this crime, and the Revolution is a sickness, which Baudelaire calls the *pox*. Benjamin cites Baudelaire's *Pauvre Belgique*:

I say *Long live the Revolution* just as I would say: *Long live Destruction! Long live Expiation! Long live Punishment! Long live Death!* Not only would I be happy to be the victim, but also I would not hate to be the executioner, to feel the Revolution both ways! We all have the spirit of the Revolution in our veins, like the pox in our bones, we are Democratised and Syphilised.³⁸

Baudelaire considers the French Revolution as a syphilitic illness and the people killed by the republicans as the innocent victims of the

³⁸ Baudelaire, "Pauvre Belgique!" *Œuvres complètes II*, ed. Claude Pichois (Paris: Gallimard, 1976) and Walter Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire, GS I*, 515.

French Revolution. This interpretation of the French Revolution undoubtedly comes from Joseph de Maistre. For Maistre, it is entirely Satanic: "What distinguishes the French Revolution and makes it an *event* unique in history is that it is radically *bad*. No element of good soothes the eye of the observer; it is the highest degree of corruption ever known; it is pure impurity."³⁹ This is because the French Revolution is the suffering of the innocent: "No doubt there are innocent people among the unfortunate victims."⁴⁰ So why must the innocent be the unfortunate? This is Joseph de Maistre's principal question, to which he replies with his theological theory of reversibility. The suffering of the innocent is interpreted as a sacrifice for the guilty. The theory of reversibility is a universal and "age-old dogma that *the innocent suffer for the benefit of the guilty*."⁴¹ The sorrows of the righteous ensure the salvation of the guilty, by means of reversibility. "*By suffering voluntarily, not only do the righteous appease themselves, but also the guilty, by means of reversibility.*"⁴² The suffering of the innocent saves the guilty. Thus the French Revolution is interpreted as the remedy for the original illness. It cures France of the original sickness. Punishing the innocent will regenerate France:

"We cannot repeat too often that men do not lead the Revolution; it is the Revolution that uses men. It is quite rightly said that *it goes along all by itself*. This phrase means that never has the Divinity shown itself so clearly in any human event. Though the vilest instruments are employed, punishment is for the sake of regeneration."⁴³

Thus punishment as original sin of the second order and regeneration as salvation are inextricably joined in Joseph de Maistre's thought. Benjamin finds in Baudelaire this motif of the reversibility of the righteous and the guilty. In *Pauvre Belgique*, Baudelaire declares that he would love to be simultaneously *victim and executioner to feel the Revolution in both ways*. This simultaneity represents the Baudelarian interpretation of the Maistrian theory of reversibility.

Benjamin considers Baudelaire as the one who hopes for the Revolution in modernity. He is a conspirator who wants to disrupt

³⁹ Joseph de Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, *Œuvres*, ed. Pierre Glaudes (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 224.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 218.

⁴² Maistre, *Les Soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, *Œuvres*, ed. Pierre Glaudes, 693.

⁴³ Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, 202.

public order. According to Benjamin, the Paris of the Second Empire, in which Baudelaire lived, was a milieu of conspirators. Benjamin sees the Paris of the Second Empire in this way: "During the Empire, Napoleon III maintained his habits as a conspirator, developing them. Surprising proclamations and petty conspiracies, sudden attacks and impenetrable irony were part of the reason of state of the Second Empire."⁴⁴ Here Benjamin was referring to *professional conspirators*, who devoted all their activity to conspiracy and lived without any ordinary occupation. The goal of professional conspirators is to create revolutions. However, according to Marx, their nature is different from that of intellectual proletarians, who make the Revolution proletarian. The condition of a proletarian revolution is that each person must be sufficiently intellectual to be aware of the classes and the proletarian community. The intellectualisation of the people enables them to be regrouped for the Revolution. Thus professional conspirators have a completely opposite character. Benjamin cites Marx:

For them, the sole condition of the Revolution is to sufficiently organise their conspiracy... They pounce on inventions that must achieve revolutionary miracles: incendiary bombs, infernal machines with magic effect, uprisings whose consequences are more surprising and miraculous the less rational their foundation. Occupied with such a frenzy of projects, they have no other end than the immediate one of overturning the current government and despising it to the highest point in order to make the workers aware of their class interests. From this comes their anger, plebeian and not proletarian, before the *black coats*, the more or less educated men who personify this aspect of the movement, and from which, despite everything, they cannot be independent, insofar as these are the official representatives of the party.⁴⁵

The conspirators are well distinguished by their black clothes. The goal of professional conspirators is none other than the pure destruction of public order, while the goal of the *black coats* is the grouping of men by intellectualisation. Therefore the conspirator is characterised by the destruction of order, while the *black coat* is characterised by the reestablishment of order. The conspirator and the *black coat* are thus two

⁴⁴ Walter Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 24; GS I, 514.

⁴⁵ Marx and Engels, review of Adolphe Chenu, *Conspireurs* (Paris, 1850) and *La naissance de la République en février 1848* by Lucien de la Hodde (Paris, 1850); cited in *Die Neue Zeit*, 4 (1886), 556, cited by Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 25–6; GS I, 514–15.

irreconcilable categories. However, this citation states that there is another element: the conspirators cannot be independent of the *black coats*. It is the inextricable nature of these two categories that Benjamin sees in Baudelaire. He also sees this in modernity through the detective novel, because the individualism of the conspirators corresponds to the dispersal of man (personified by the criminal of the detective novel) and the communitarianism of the *black coats* corresponds to the idea of uniting men (personified by the detective in the detective novel).

The conspirator personifies the Baconian mistrust of language, that is to say, the belief in the incommunicability between men. He does not desire the unity of men to achieve his goal. This is because his goal is to destroy the very idea of community. The conspirator presents himself as the enemy of the idea of human community. He is a terrorist with no other ambition but to destroy community and public order. Benjamin finds this terrorist nature in Baudelaire, in commenting on this citation: "In fact, even the terrorist delirium that Marx discovers among conspirators finds its match in Baudelaire. He writes to his mother on 23 December 1865: 'But if I can ever recapture the vigour and the energy that I have sometimes enjoyed, I will relieve my anger through dreadful books. I would like to set the entire human race against me. I see in this an enjoyment that would console me for everything.' This suppressed rage (*la rogne*) was the state of mind that had nourished the Parisian professional conspirators during half a century of combat on the barricades."⁴⁶ The conspirator seeks to be the enemy of the whole human race. All that he desires is to destroy the very bonds between men.

The conspirator is characterised by the "revolt against bourgeois notions of order and honour."⁴⁷ What is important here is that Baudelaire gives "a radical theological form to his radical rejection of masters and the powerful."⁴⁸ This radical theological form concerns another face of the conspirator: the inseparability from order. According to Benjamin, Baudelaire understands the inseparability of order in terms of Providence:

It [Baudelaire's poetry] was able to understand the songs of the Revolution, but it was not deaf to the 'superior voice' that raised itself in the drum

⁴⁶ Walter Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 27–8; GS I, 516.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 39; GS I, 525.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*; *Ibid.*

rolls of capital executions. When Bonaparte assumes power thanks to a *coup d'état*, Baudelaire is immediately indignant: "Then he will see events "from a providential point of view" and subjugate himself like a monk."⁴⁹

Through the *coup d'état*, Napoleon certainly destroyed public order (which is the desire of the conspirator), but he re-established public order by taking political power (which is opposed to the conspirator's desire). Baudelaire understands this re-establishment of order in terms of Providence. Thus he sees the paradoxical identity of the disorder of the Revolution and the order of Providence.

Besides, Benjamin reads the last poem of the cycle entitled *Révolte: Les Litanies de Satan*. This poem considers the Revolution as Satanic and the conspirator as the Luciferian Satan: "According to him, Satan does not only speak for the humble. He also speaks for the powerful."⁵⁰ The poem, *Les Litanies de Satan*, states: "You who give the outlaw that calm and haughty look / That damns the whole multitude around his scaffold."⁵¹ In this poem, Satan saves the victim of the Revolution and he executes the executioner of the Revolution; that is to say the conspirator. Therefore Baudelaire's Providence is considered similar to Maistrian Providence from the point of view of the guilty. In Maistrian Providence, the righteous suffers to save the guilty. On the contrary, in Baudelarian Providence, the guilty commits a crime to save the righteous, because that will enable the latter to save the former. Thus Baudelaire emphasises that the guilty are the remedy for the original illness. Therefore Baudelaire's Providence is considered as the other face of Joseph de Maistre's Providence. For both of them, it is a question of the paradoxical identity of the righteous and the guilty. Baudelaire's Satan renders this identity possible. Therefore Benjamin concludes about Baudelaire's Providence: "It is not a question of sacrament or prayer. It is a question of the Luciferian privilege to blaspheme the Devil who is therefore the victim."⁵² The conspirator blasphemes his blasphemer even in the plan of Providence. We can say that the blaspheming of blasphemy is the Baudelarian interpretation of the Maistrian theory of reversibility. Benjamin considers Baudelaire to be the better

⁴⁹ Ibid., 42; GS I, 527–8.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 39; Ibid., 525.

⁵¹ Baudelaire, *Œuvres*, 193, cited by Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 38; GS I, 524).

⁵² Walter Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 40; GS I, 526.

reader of the following lines from Marx's *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*:

When, at the Council of Constance, the puritans complained about the dissolute lives of the popes and lamented the necessity for a moral reform, Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly cried in a thunderous voice: "Only the Devil in person can save the Catholic Church, and you ask for angels!"... In the same way the French bourgeoisie will cry on the morrow of the *coup d'état*: "Only the leaders of the Society of December Tenth can still save bourgeois society! Only the theft can still save property, false oaths religion, illegitimacy the family, disorder order."⁵³

Only disorder can save order.

Disorder is the remedy for order. It is entirely included in the plan of Providence. Maistre says: "Nothing happens by chance in this world, and even in a secondary sense there is no disorder at all, for disorder is commanded by a sovereign hand that bends it to the rule and forces it to work towards the goal."⁵⁴ According to Joseph de Maistre, disorder is ordered in the plan of Providence. This is also what Benjamin sees in Baudelaire's Satanism. Thus the Revolution and the conspirator are desirable for both Baudelaire and Benjamin. As we have seen, the conspirator personifies the guilt of modernity, that is, the isolation of modern men. The liberation of this guilt does not consist in being in opposition to it, but in pushing it to the extreme. If Benjamin thus sees redemption in modernity, we can say that his theological idea about modernity owes much to Joseph de Maistre, because this redemption would not be feasible without the Maistrian logic of reversibility.

Conclusion

Benjamin defines modernity as the site of conflict between mistrust in the communicability between men and their reactionary desire to re-establish human bonds. The conflict between the detective and the criminal in the detective novel represents this conflict *par excellence*.⁵⁵

⁵³ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis-Bonaparte," *Studienausgabe 4: Geschichte und Politik 2* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1966), 18–119, cited by Benjamin, "Le Paris du second empire chez Baudelaire," *Charles Baudelaire*, 39–40; GS I, 525–526).

⁵⁴ Maistre, *Considérations sur la France*, 271.

⁵⁵ Although within a radically different framework, Herbert Marcuse is also interested in the relationship Maistre proposes between revolution and order. See the next

The originality of Benjamin's interpretation of Maistre is to link the idea of anti-Baconism with that of Revolution and of reversibility. In his *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, Maistre emphasises the necessity of logic as the intermediary for accessing truth and he criticises Bacon's philosophy, which consists in the absence of this intermediary and which renders ideas isolated. In Maistre's critique of Bacon, it is purely a question of the scientific problem of knowledge. However, Benjamin also applies it to the socio-political problem of the mutual distrust between modern men. This application characterised Benjamin's reading of the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon* and permits him to link the scientific idea of anti-Baconism with the socio-political idea of the Counter-revolution. Henceforth, the idea of the Counter-revolution is understood as the idea of re-establishing the *intermediary* between modern men, being the human bond. Whereas anti-Baconism is Maistre's direct influence on Benjamin, the idea of the Counter-revolution is his indirect influence through Baudelaire's Satanism. Baudelarian Satanism consists in the reversibility of the righteous and the guilty. For Benjamin, this is the theology that corresponds to modernity and the Revolution is the expression of this theology. By its Satanic nature, the Revolution facilitates the liberation of modern man. This is not only a socio-political release, but also a liberation on the level of ideas. The Revolution resolves both the profusion of isolated men and that of isolated ideas. Benjamin thus describes the redemption of modernity and this redemption is based on the Maistrian logic of reversibility.

essay in this volume, by Michael Kohlhauer, "A Dialectical Reading of Joseph de Maistre by Herbert Marcuse."

A DIALECTICAL READING OF JOSEPH DE MAISTRE BY
HERBERT MARCUSE

Michael Kohlhauer

...eine bewusst irrationalistische und traditionalistische Autoritätslehre.
Herbert Marcuse, *Studie über Autorität und Familie* (1936).

An Unlikely Encounter?¹

The question deserves to be asked: how did a Marxist author, or one so reputed, close to the Frankfurt School, happen to take an interest in Joseph de Maistre to the point of devoting to him an authentic study and part of a work? This question could also be asked in the opposite way: how could a thinker as well-informed about everything touching the world and a reader as curious as Herbert Marcuse, who deeply and personally knew Kant, Hegel and Marx, but also Spengler and Sartre, etc., fail to encounter one day or another, along his way, Maistre, this surveyor of every extreme?

For the Maistrians that we are, there is nothing at all preposterous about this. The proof rests in the numerous readings and the most diverse commentaries that this thinker's works have attracted over the years, setting aside all ideological caution. As a matter of interest, in no particular order and without claiming to be exhaustive, we cite: Saint-Simon, Ballanche, and Comte, from the sociology side;² Pierre Leroux,³ in terms of social critique; Jules Michelet,⁴ Oswald Spengler, Walter Benjamin, and Ernst Bloch,⁵ for the philosophy of history;

¹ This article was translated from French by Richard A. Lebrun.

² See Jean-René Derré, "Ballanche continuateur et contradicteur de Joseph de Maistre," *Revue des études maistriennes*, 5–6 (1979), 297–316; Pierre Macherey, "Le positivisme entre la révolution et la contre-révolution. Comte et Maistre," *Revue de synthèse*, 62 (1991), 41–7; Alain Finkielkraut, *La défaite de la pensée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1987), 68 ff. and 81.

³ Pierre Leroux, *Oeuvres* (1850–1851). (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1978), 1: 92.

⁴ See Jules Michelet, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Paul Viallaneix (Paris: Flammarion, 1971), 1: 275.

⁵ See Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Taschenbuch Verlag, 1979), 2: 659.

Donoso Cortés, Carl Schmitt, and Charles Maurras, from political law;⁶ René Girard, the anthropologist, whose work *La violence et le sacré* (1972) owes much to Maistrian intuitions concerning the emissary victim,⁷ as formulated in the *Éclaircissement sur les sacrifices*; Lamennais,⁸ Vigny, Lamartine,⁹ Balzac,¹⁰ Baudelaire (and, notably, his “theory of correspondences”),¹¹ Jules Barbey d’Aureville, Léon Bloy,¹² “the school of evil,”¹³ and finally Miguel de Unamuno, Borges, and Cioran,¹⁴ for literature.

Having said this, convincing evidence exists confirming that the real and profound interest of the future theoretician of a libertarian utopia never ceased to embrace the work of a reactionary thinker. When, and through what means did Marcuse encounter the work? It is difficult to say. One chapter of his thesis on *Der deutsche Künstlerroman* (1922) is devoted to French post-Enlightenment literature: only Benjamin Constant, Germaine de Staël, Chateaubriand, and Claude Henri de

⁶ See Charles Maurras, *Oeuvres capitale* (Paris: Flammarion, 1954), 12; by the same author, *Dictionnaire politique et critique* (Paris: Fayard, 1932), 3: 14; also see Jean Zaganiaris, “Réflexions sur une ‘intimité’: Joseph de Maistre et Carl Schmitt,” *L’homme et la société*, 140–1 (2001).

⁷ See René Girard, *La violence et le sacré* (Paris: Grasset, 1972), 11ff. and 82, and Bernard Sarrazin, “La notion de sacrifice de Joseph de Maistre à Léon Bloy,” *Revue des études maistriennes*, 3 (1977), 158.

⁸ See Jean-René Derré, *Lamennais, ses amis et le mouvement des idées à l’époque romantique* (1824–1834) (Paris: Klincksieck, 1962), 12, note 31, as well as Louis Le Guillou, “Joseph de Maistre et Lamennais,” *Revue des études maistriennes*, 3 (1977), 102 ff.

⁹ See Alphonse de Lamartine, *Cours familier de littérature* (Paris: Lemerre, 1859), 7: 393–472 and 8: 6–80; by the same author, *Confidences* (Paris: Lemerre, 1887), 417–419. See also Jean Rebotton, “Lamartine et la famille Maistre,” *Revue des études maistriennes*, 4 (1978), 91–139.

¹⁰ See Honoré de Balzac, *La comédie humaine*, éd. Marcel Bouteron (La Pléiade, Paris: Gallimard, 1951), 4: 499 and 7: 385.

¹¹ See Charles Baudelaire, *Correspondance*, ed. Claude Pichois and Jean Ziegler (Paris: Gallimard (La Pléiade), 1966 and 1973, 1: 337; and the same author, *L’art romantique* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1968), 128. See also Jean-Paul Sartre, *Baudelaire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947), 75.

¹² See Stanislas Fumet, “Vie de l’auteur,” in Léon Bloy, *Le mendiant ingrat*, in *L’œuvre complète*, ed. Joseph Bollery, (Paris: Editions François Bernouard, 1948), 9: 19 and 20; by the same author, Léon Bloy, *Inédits*, in *Œuvres*, eds. Joseph Bollery and Jean Petit (Paris: Mercure de France, 1975), 15: 47.

¹³ Ernest Hello, *Textes choisis*, ed. Stanislas Fumet (Fribourg: Ergloff, 1945), 124; Léon Bloy, *Œuvres*, ed. Joseph Vollery and Jean Petit (Paris: Mercure de France, 1964–1975), 2: 862, 9: 323.

¹⁴ See Miguel de Unamuno, *Del sentimiento trágico de la vida* (Buenos Aires: Losada, 1964), 70, and Emile Michel Cioran, *Exercices d’admiration. Essais et portraits* (Paris: Gallimard, 1986), 11 ff.; “Leçons de sagesse” (sayings collected by Michael Jakob), *Magazine littéraire*, 327 (1994), 18–27.

Saint-Simon for political thought are the subject of a few lines.¹⁵ On the other hand, there is nothing on the author of *Les soirées*. But if he did not mention him, Marcuse must have approached Maistre's thought second-hand through the book by the Danish critic Georg Brandes, *Die Hauptströmungen der Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* (1900), cited on several occasions.¹⁶ Or perhaps through Madame de Staël, Benjamin Constant, Friedrich Schlegel, or Novalis, all readers (sometimes contradictory) of the Savoyard writer. In any case, the first explicit reference to Joseph de Maistre is found in the writings for the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* (1934–41), devoted to the history of authoritarian thought, as well as to philosophy and the elaboration of a critical social theory. As well as in a long and substantial "Studien über Autorität und Familie," rewritten later under different circumstances (to which we will return). Besides the chapter *Gegenrevolution und Restauration*, other parts evoke the intellectual heritage bequeathed by the author of the *Étude sur la souveraineté*¹⁷: as the instigator, together with Saint-Simon and Comte of sociology, if not positivism (which is only fair); as one of the "godfathers of the original philosophies of the Counter-revolution," the other one being Louis de Bonald.^{18,19} For the historian of ideas, Maistre here in good and worthy company here, with Johann Gottfried Herder,²⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville,²¹ Georges Sorel and his *Réflexions sur la violence*, Oswald Spengler, author of the *Déclin de l'Occident*, Carl Schmitt²² and Ernst Jünger.^{23,24} In other words, Marcuse

¹⁵ Herbert Marcuse, *Der deutsche Künstlerroman* (Dissertation, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1922); *Frühe Aufsätze* (1928–1933), in *Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978), 1: 174.

¹⁶ Notably in vol. 3: "Die Reaktion in Frankreich," 175 and 179.

¹⁷ See *Œuvres complètes* (14 vols., Lyon: Vitte and Perrussel, 1884), 1: 367, 373, 375.

¹⁸ See *Théorie du pouvoir*, in *Œuvres* (2 vols., Paris, 1854), 1: 101.

¹⁹ The references to Maistre and Bonald are from Herbert Marcuse, *Vernunft und Revolution. Hegel und die Entstehung der Gesellschaftstheorie* [Original title: *Reason and Revolution. Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (New York: Humanities Press, 1941), in *Schriften* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1989), 4: 287 and 301.

²⁰ *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, in *Werke*, ed. Bernhard Suphan (Berlin, 1877–1913), 13 and 14: 208, 154.

²¹ *Democracy in America* (2 vols., New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1904), 2: 584.

²² *Politische Theologie* (1922); *Staat, Bewegung, Volk* (1933).

²³ *Der Arbeiter. Herrschaft und Gestalt* (Hamburg: Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt, 1932), 198.

²⁴ The references to these authors are found in Marcuse's essays "Der Kampf gegen den Liberalismus in der totalitären Staatsauffassung," (1934), "Studien über Autorität und Familie" (1936), "Über den affirmativen Charakter der Kultur" (1937), "Einige gesellschaftliche Folgen moderner Technologie," (1941), in *Schriften* (Frankfurt am

knew his classics and above all, he was a tireless reader of immense culture, a great reader without any other imperative than that of free intelligence.

Undoubtedly, nothing illustrates this better than his essay on the Counter-revolution.²⁵ So I will draw on this small text from 1936, republished in 1968, to demonstrate at the same time the method and the richness of a truly dialectical and dialogical endeavour that listens to the thought of the other, even when it is contrary, in order to establish its own reflection. I thus propose a reading that I would call critical philology, since it goes from the text to the context (historical, philosophical, and political), from the protocol of reading to its possible meanings in the period. I will therefore begin with the essay and what it expresses about the way Marcuse reads Maistre, then proceeding to the editorial context first, but also to the cultural and historical context of the period. The following question will serve as the common thread: how did Marcuse read Maistre and what did he retain from him? Here, I state the subject of my conclusion: while contradicting him on the essentials, Marcuse's critical theory owes much and undoubtedly more than has been imagined, to the Counter-Enlightenment thinker.

An Accurate Reading

First of all, the text. Starting from it means shifting the emphasis twice: from the readings that nourished it into action, the protocol of reading properly speaking; but also from the meaning of words in the prior work of thinking. In order to attempt to rediscover this through something such as the practice of reading, via priorities and procedures, but also through the choices, the oversights, or the silences of this reader who is also the writer. Even before the eager interpretation of the meaning, we have the *lector in scriptura* (or *scriptor legens*), the reader at work and in the work, or the writer such as his readings reveal him: a reader of texts; a reader in the text as well; finally, the reader in the writing. Although it barely takes into account this inherent work of the reader, to some extent, the text indicates the route and the method

Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978), 8: 38, 44, 175, 177sq., 192, 199ff., 200, 203, 221 and 313.

²⁵ See Herbert Marcuse, *Studien über Autorität und Familie* (1936) (in particular the chapter "Gegenrevolution und Restauration"), in *Schriften*, 3: 142–51. The pages that follow refer to this edition.

to follow. Rather than informing us about the libraries and the cultures of the author, it allows us to gauge the road travelled, from the reception of the idea borrowed elsewhere to its writing in the essay. That is to say that the form in itself already conveys a position, and that beyond this, an ethic of reading is recognizable from the multiple rhetorical indices that signal thought at work.

Now the evidence is there, such as it stands out from a coherent reading of his essay devoted to the popular Counter-revolution. As a close reading of the discourse shows, there is nothing in Marcuse of the controversial vein that one would expect, considering the ideological distance that separates him from Joseph de Maistre. There is no ordered attack, no critical commentary, not even an implicit opinion. On the contrary, the tone is neutral, even distant and not at all partisan. We might be astonished by this, since we are dealing with an author who never kept his political tendencies a secret. Undoubtedly this proves that Marcuse takes Maistre's thought seriously and that he seeks to argue from it rather than against it. If I did not fear to use a term a little out of fashion among philosophers, but which, in this case, maintains all its acuteness, I would willingly speak of a dialectical reading, in the two meanings of the word: dialogic and distanced. Dialogic, because it is open to the other; and distanced, because it is geared towards summary rather than transformed by the spirit of contradiction.

Better than summarising it or commenting on it, Marcuse lets the text speak in his stead, as close as possible to the original. Moreover, in the course of argumentation, the author takes care to specify "that here it is not a question of an interpretation, but of the text to the letter of the word."²⁶ His knowledge of Maistre's work seems profound, to judge by the variety and the extent of the sources cited, most often in the form of extracts. Few are the allusions or affirmations that are not followed by their precise references, or supported by original citations, in French in the text. (This is scarcely astonishing, since we are dealing with a cosmopolitan thinker, at ease in the great cultures of the world; a European before the term existed, Marcuse spoke no less than five languages, and undoubtedly read even more). Faithful and precise (except for a misprint due to the repetition of a segment of a sentence),²⁷ these are extracts from the Lyon edition (1891–2), cited in abundance.

²⁶ Marcuse, *Schriften*, 3: 148.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 143.

This proves again that Marcuse had not only read Maistre, as well as other thinkers of the Counter-revolution, beginning with Burke, Bonald, or Gentz, but that he had read him well, “pen in hand,” as the author of *Les soirées* would say.

From his reading of Maistre, Marcuse retains above all the political philosopher, the theoretician of authority and finally the anthropologist of human darkness, the tireless denigrator of naivety and other Rousseauistic visions regarding man. The writer on the other hand, interests him only a little, in a marginal way. We know less of him, but there is at least another Maistre, still more important than the lone champion of the Counter-revolution: the one who rethinks history in the light of the Terror and evil through this. Maistre undoubtedly understood his epoch better than others and what it predicted for the future (to the point of envisaging, against the optimism of the Enlightenment, the new hypothesis of a history with an unending script, forever hostile to man, the inexhaustible source of endless repetitive catastrophes). One of the very first, Pierre Barbéris,²⁸ clarified what modernity owes to the retrograde vulgate reputed for its anti-modernity: in the first place a changed conception (some would say an anthropology), more sombre (or lucid) of man, both individually and collectively; consequently a close analysis, in great depth, of a being within society as well as of the relations of power, manipulation, and especially self-delusion which found in social life, beyond words and appearances; finally the pessimistic, if not tragic vision, of a fundamentally absurd history, that is a stranger to the human project.

Evidently, it is certainly this Maistre that Marcuse summons in turn, after Baudelaire, Bloy, Barbey, Cioran, Steiner, and some others. Thus the study recalls (in French in the text) certain Maistrian formulas. Among the best known are: “man in general, if left to himself, is too wicked to be free;”²⁹ “Human reason reduced to its own resources is nothing but a brute, all of whose power is restricted to destruction,”³⁰ “as useless for the happiness of states as for that of individuals,”³¹ before concluding with the author himself, “the human impossibility of

²⁸ See Pierre Barbéris, *Balzac et le mal du siècle* (Paris: Galliard, 1970), 2: 892 ff.

²⁹ *Du pape*, ed. Jacques Lovie and Joannès Chetail (Geneva: Droz, 1966), 232.

³⁰ *De la souveraineté du peuple*, ed. Jean-Louis Darcel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 132–3.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 140.

creating something": "Society is not the work of man, but the immediate result of the will of the Creator who has willed that man be what he has always been everywhere."³² This is where the moral of "domestication" comes from, nothing less (the word is Marcuse's; others would rather speak of "voluntary servitude"), founded on *prejudice*, which the author of the *Principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, following others, defines as a "system of dogmas, of beliefs,"³³ "not necessarily... false ideas, but only, in the strict sense of the word, any opinions adopted before any examination. Now these sorts of opinions are man's great need."³⁴ In plain language, "to guide his behaviour, man has no need of reason, but rather beliefs. His cradle should be surrounded by dogmas; and, when his reason is awakened, it should find all his opinions made, at least all those relating to his conduct."³⁵

Now there is nothing more contrary to critical thought than this total triumph of prejudice over reason. With respect to the Maistrian vision of man, Marcuse writes with a touch of secret fascination, it can be understood both as "hatred and scorn, but also intelligence of the world ("Weltklugheit") and of power: man bereft of God is only a wicked cowardly, clumsy, and half-blind animal; when reduced to himself he produces filth and disorder and when it comes down to it he asks only to be dominated and led, total dependence suiting him best."³⁶ Here, we can see that we are far from the Enlightenment of Kant or Rousseau, also far from Hegel, the other great figure in this essay, and from their attempt to conciliate [think together about] reason, authority, and freedom, in the social contract, or through the modern state.³⁷ Rather, a tone of defeat seems to dominate this 1936 essay, to the point of envisaging a possible failure of critical reason. To the attentive reader this is obvious. Following Maistre, the Counter-revolution and the insistent recall of modesty in the face of the timeless order of the world, implies complete trust, one dares not say optimism in history that the essay places in doubt and problematises, short of renouncing it completely.

³² Ibid., 97.

³³ *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Œuvres*, ed. Pierre Glaudes (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 375 [paraphrased].

³⁴ *De la souveraineté*, 147.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Marcuse, *Schriften*, 3: 145.

³⁷ Ibid., 143 and 147.

From One Domination, Another

Why this interest in Maistre, that one would say conveys annoyance, especially at this moment? And what does this mean with respect to Marcuse's effort to think in his epoch, in his time and place? To pose the question in this way is to answer it already. As we have seen, Marcuse's reading, positioned between the review and the commentary, the argument and the stance, is not conclusive, preferring to leave the meaning in suspense. Faithful in this regard, it practices neither criticism nor adhesion; it is, if one likes, above all problematic, because it is attentive, open to the thought of the other, and thus dialectical. Hence the following hypothesis: the detour through Maistre and the vulgate of the Counter-Enlightenment was undoubtedly a way of saying *something else*. But what exactly?

The editorial but also historical context that surrounds the writing of the essay offers the first element of a response. We know that the *Studien über Autorität und Familie* that contained the chapter on the Counter-revolution was published by Alcan in Paris in 1936, before being re-published in 1969, in a collection entitled *Ideen zu einer kritischen Theorie der Gesellschaft*.³⁸ These studies precede by one year, like a *propédeutic*,³⁹ another of Marcuse's great texts, *Philosophie und kritische Theorie* (1937),⁴⁰ which constituted an initial significant attempt to formulate what some people, Max Horkheimer among others,⁴¹ were to call the "critical social theory." It is to be noted that the 1969 text follows that of 1936 word for word. It is as if, by publishing it again in a different context, the author of the essay had wanted to affirm the permanence of the theses developed earlier. However, the title is changed and with this it, the very meaning: *Ideen zu einer kritischen Theorie der Gesellschaft*. The terms already reveal both the construction of the essay and the theory in the making, in other words, the thought at work and at large, 'heretical', Adorno would have said.⁴² Far from being complete

³⁸ Herbert Marcuse, *Ideen zu einer kritischen Theorie der Gesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1969), 113–29.

³⁹ Foundation course for first year university students.

⁴⁰ Marcuse, *Philosophie und kritische Theorie*, in *Schriften*, 3: 227–49.

⁴¹ See Martin Jay, "The Frankfurt School in Exile," in *Perspectives in American History*, 6: 340, cited in Alain Martineau, *Herbert Marcuse's Utopia*, trans. Jane Brierley (Montreal: Harvest House, 1986), 118.

⁴² Theodor W. Adorno, "The Essay as Form," *Notes to Literature*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann and trans. Shierry Weber Nicholson (2 vols., New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), vol. 1.

or definitive, here the idea searches for itself as it is nourished by annexed, related, and contrary reflections. This is because the very purpose has changed. Rather than illuminating authoritarian ideology from the inside in its familial, social, and cultural manifestations, it is a question, more seriously, of rethinking a critical alternative to triumphant capitalism and so-called consumer society.

From one text to the other, the context has thus changed. Whereas in 1936 there was the inexorable rise of Nazism, an extreme form of political authoritarianism (let us note that Marcuse, contrary to a certain Isaiah Berlin for example,⁴³ does not establish a connection between Maistre and fascism, either closely or remotely); in the 60s, heated by the fevers of revolt of a whole angry student generation, there was the hippy utopia and other protest movements that followed. In the meantime, history will have shown other faces, no less hideous and experienced other deviations, no less absurd: the Korean and Vietnamese wars, the Budapest insurrection and the Prague Spring, police repressions that, in the East as in the West, stirred up the same riots in the name of freedom. 1969, let us recall, followed closely after the agitation that embraced diverse American campuses, before reaching in turn the Berlin of Rudi Dutschke and the Paris of May 1968.⁴⁴ In these years, Marcuse already had behind him works that are still significant today, beginning with *Der eindimensionale Mensch* (1968).⁴⁵ This is the period in which he wrote *Das Ende der Utopie* (1968), *Versuch über die Befreiung* (1969), shortly followed by *Counter-revolution and Revolt* (1972), with its paradoxical, almost Maistrian title. So many writings that tried to seize the atmosphere of the time and the issues of the epoch: the alienation of the individual and his reification in a world dominated by commercial relations and under the influence of technoscience (what Charles Péguy, in a magic formula, had already called “sociometric terror”), the illusions of pure freedom and the false consolations of the cultural industry; consequently, the totalitarian temptations in the very heart of democracies reputed to be free or so-called

⁴³ See Isaiah Berlin, “Maistre and the Origins of Fascism,” *New York Review of Books*, 37, 16 (1990), 61ff. See as well, by the same author, *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, ed. Henry Hardy (London: John Murray, 1990), 91–174.

⁴⁴ See Herbert Marcuse, *Die Studentenbewegung und Ihre Folgen*, in *Nachgelassene Schriften*, ed. Peter-Erwin Jansen, trans. Thomas Laugstien (Springer: Zu Klampen Verlag, 2004), 4: 77 ff., 84 ff., 185.

⁴⁵ See Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xvi, 2–3, 19, and 56ff.

popular; finally, the absence of a real political alternative and the impotence of all opposition, after the patent failure of Soviet communism.⁴⁶

However, returning to the text and the question: what role did the rather unexpected reference to Joseph de Maistre really play in this radical critique of advanced capitalist society? In order to understand it, one must read the essay on Counter-revolution in the light of the two editions, from a double perspective, superimposed so to speak. Published for the first time in 1936, in the context that we know, the study above all assumed an attitude, indeed a pathology of authority, constituting the so-called 'Wilhelmine' ideology, which undermined the interior of the young Weimar Republic, scarcely born and already in danger of death. It is as if Marcuse, and the authors of the *Zentrum für Sozialforschung* with him, notably Adorno and Horkheimer (but also Heinrich Mann and Kurt Tucholsky for literature),⁴⁷ had been trying to exorcise, through the authoritarian personality, an embryonic or already established fascism. In 1969, with the advent of democracies, the same study assumes a totally different, broader meaning. In effect, it is no longer a question of *social psychology*, but a well and truly *political ideology*; in other words, denouncing here a practice of authority (today we would say of governance), that moreover is democratic, founded on a new authoritarianism (we dare not say a totalitarianism)⁴⁸ perhaps more harmful, since it no longer says its name.

As we can see, nothing is more remote, more contrary to this new form of domination, infinitely more subtle than all those that preceded it, than the libertarian utopia theorised by Herbert Marcuse to free the individual and subjectivity from the deadly forces that hinder it. Free sexuality, tenderness, desire or pleasure; work that becomes play, fraternity experienced daily, against free and even unbridled competition;

⁴⁶ See Herbert Marcuse, *Soviet Marxism. A Critical Analysis* (New York: Random House, 1961).

⁴⁷ One thinks in particular of the trilogy *Das Kaiserreich* (1925), which includes "three novels of German society in the period of William II": *Die Armen* (1917), *Der Untertan* (1918) and *Der Kopf* (1925), dedicated respectively to the proletariat, the bourgeoisie, and the ruling elite; see Hermann Glaser (et al.), *Wege der deutschen Literatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Ullstein Verlag, 1972), 391 ff. Also see in another register, the numerous writings by which Kurt Tucholsky never ceased to warn against the Prussian military spirit of the Wilhelminian epoch. See in particular "Das menschliche Paris" (1924) and "D'une autre barrière" (1925), in *Gesamtausgabe*, ed. Stephanie J. Burrows (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2000), 6: 176–180 and 7: 174–177.

⁴⁸ Herbert Marcuse speaks of a "scientific (rational) totalization of controls," *Die Permanenz der Kunst. Wider eine bestimmte marxistische Ästhetik/ein Essay* (München-Wien: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1977), 37.

autonomous art, inevitably subversive, transcendent, and distanced in essence,⁴⁹ which opens up another place to the real; the feast of life, finally: such are the retreats and the resorts envisaged by the Berkeley philosopher to foil the ultimate capital rationale and to somewhat emancipate the social being from the servitude of the market, from technology and profit. However the times are different, hard, inflexible, witnessing war, violence, unreason and also prejudice, in short, the power of force and a whole arbitrary order, so far from a better future, because it did not wish to be beautiful, as the bourgeoisie hoped, at the time when it still considered itself as the heir of Enlightenment. In sum, everything takes place exactly as Maistre had foreseen, if not predicted.

Thus history (if not ideology) would have proved the counter-revolutionary thinker right against his critics from all sides. After 1789, with the Terror first, then the modern republic, another power became established; though it was still a power, it had a different form: a little more hidden or disguised and all the more ambiguous. Certainly, what the author of *Der eindimensionale Mensch* sees at work today is democracy and indeed freedom in name only; rather it uses the Enlightenment ideal to more effectively misrepresent it as ideology. Whether it means excessive consumption (accompanied by social atomism), maximum exploitation (coupled with a general increase in the standard of living), false consciousness or alienation, the reification of social relations through market fetishism, etc.,⁵⁰ at the heart of it, 'established' society means nothing other than "the new servitude of the freed man to the era of total capitalism."⁵¹

Negative Reason

Now, the thesis that opens (and summarises) the essay is better understood. Originally conceived as the *a posteriori* justification of an order

⁴⁹ See Ibid., 49 ff.; see also Stephen Eric Bronner, "Between Art and Utopia: Reconsidering the Aesthetic Theory of Herbert Marcuse," in *Marcuse. Critical Theory and the Promise of Utopia*, eds. Robert B. Pippin et al. (South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1988), 107 ff.

⁵⁰ See Herbert Marcuse, *Konterrevolution und Revolte* [original title: *Conterrevolution and Revolt* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972) (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973), 21, 23, 29, 32.

⁵¹ To cite the (very Marcusean) title of a work by Dany-Robert Dufour, published by Denoël in 2003.

dismantled by history, that of tradition, while it is still merged with the evidence of order, over the course of its long history, the Counter-revolution theory would have undergone “a change of essential function,” to the point of seeing itself today “adopted by the dominant levels of the bourgeoisie.” And the author concludes:

Having been the object of theory, the bourgeoisie becomes its subject. For our time, it represents the most grandiose example of defending and legitimising a threatened social order. This change in the theory’s function goes hand in hand with the history of the bourgeoisie, from the struggle of a rising class against the remains of a social order that has become a restraint to the absolute domination of a few privileged levels confronted with the fervour of all progressive forces; likewise, this is accompanied by the abandonment of all the values proclaimed by it during its expansion.⁵²

We measure the paradox. By reading Maistre, Marcuse subjects to Counter-revolution critique the very order that originated from the Revolution, in a word, a society that has not at all become conservative or reactionary, but well and truly counter-revolutionary, in the precise and first meaning of the term. Thus, with the triumph of the bourgeois, market or capitalist order (it matters little), the authority would have changed sides, if not its nature. From theoretical (in its counter-revolutionary version) it would have become practical, to the extent of founding a new order of power (in democratic society, among others), thus marking the failure of the critical reason proclaimed by the Enlightenment, and then by Hegel and Marx. By way of digression, this return of things, or this “ruse of history” (to use an Hegelian expression), is a *topos* that could not be more Maistrian: like a negative force, Providence dispossesses us and sets us apart from it, even as it gives us the illusion of being free. History, Maistre would say, operates by subtraction or correction: it is will less the unforeseen; everything that remains apart from the intention.

Counter-revolution and Revolt (1973). This is the title of a late, definitive work by Marcuse. More than the term alone, it borrows from Maistre the gesture that properly characterises it: the inversion, the reversal or the radical opposite. Not another revolution, one more revolution, but something other than the Revolution. Moreover, the word remains ambiguous, as it intentionally refers to the Counter-Enlightenment

⁵² Marcuse, *Schriften*, 3: 142.

tradition, the order originating from 1789, which through reaction becomes conservatism, Counter-revolution, finally the call to resistance, revolt or utopia through the subversion of that very order.⁵³ Besides, the libertarian Marcuse is not thinking about that inverted society, finally back on its feet, when he very ideally invokes “the very idea of socialism as a qualitatively other *totality*?”⁵⁴ In which case the loop is closed, and the confusion perfect. Counter-revolution, counter-culture: it is always swept along by a contradiction, if not to say a refusal and the idea (if not the ideal) that attempts to assert itself as the real truth.

Hence, the more than probable hypothesis which I am defending here. By insisting (twice, under different circumstances) on the *actuality* of the Maistrian thesis, by the same token Marcuse notes the impasse, if not the failure, of the Enlightenment, yesterday as today; against these, he verifies the reverse and the defeats of a proclaimed history, which has gone astray, lost along the way. Beyond doubt, in the text of his youth, written in the context that we know and rewritten years later, there is something of the lost illusion, of the promise not kept. At a time threatened by fascism or later by advanced democracy and capitalism, what hope remained to him for a better world founded on reason and freedom, thought by the Enlightenment and implemented by the Revolution of 1789? In reality, this is the question that Marcuse posed, both with and against Maistre.

By way of a digression, the question certainly does not fail to recall the approach of the critical theory formulated by Adorno or notably Horkheimer:⁵⁵ to think the heritage of the *Aufklärung* in the light of its own deviations, failings, and other impasses; in a word, subjecting the reason of the Enlightenment to the test of recent history. The theses are known; I recall some of them: when perverted by scientific or historical reason, or by reason of the state (Hegel), modern rationalism in turn becomes an instrument of social domination. In the same way, the cult of science and of technology leads to a standardisation, then to a dehumanisation of the world, and to modern barbarism. Finally, “progress threatens to annihilate the very goal to which it strives in

⁵³ See Marcuse, *Versuch über die Befreiung*, in *Schriften*, 8: 244 sq.

⁵⁴ Marcuse, *Konterrevolution und Revolte*, 9.

⁵⁵ See Max Horkheimer, *Die Anfänge der bürgerlichen Philosophie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Bücherei, 1971). Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer Verlag, 1973).

principle: the idea of man" (Horkheimer).⁵⁶ Hence the paradox that he affirms (with Adorno), in the name of reason itself, the loss of all confidence in its power of affirmation: "instrumental reason is in no way reason, but an understanding that deceives itself, by taking itself for reason."⁵⁷

To properly define critical theory, this turnaround of reason against itself is already no less Maistrian. Thus in his exile, Maistre reversed the initial intention, from his clear-cut rejection of 1789 to subjecting the critical reason of Enlightenment to a critique of reason itself. With the old order definitively past, the only thing that interested him was what has always been the basis of society: power, interest, prejudice and, with these, the whole unconscious of the unspoken things and the taboos that men feign to ignore, even as they recount their history. "Men are always deceived by words."⁵⁸ The true conscience of suspicion is met by reactionary thought by marking the limits of reason, force, violence, and lies, before seizing them with the ink of paradox and the fragment, two essential figures of Maistrian style. Still marked by the biblical myth of the Fall (reinterpreted and re-actualised in the light of historical events), the man that he glimpses is already situated in opposition to the rational being, transparent to himself and others, the dream of the Enlightenment; he has his reasons, that reason precisely feigns not to know: calculation and interest, but also prejudice, belief, and self-delusion; finally, a whole unthought social and individual realm, at the basis of what must be called the misunderstanding of history.

If it exists, the real actuality of Maistre, the '*mécontemporain*' ['discontented contemporary'],⁵⁹ the solitary doomsayer going against the flow of history, is certainly there: in this dialectal, distanced reading of political reality, which it facilitates through contrast and contrariness. Let us not forget, as Marcuse recalls, that the Counter-revolution

⁵⁶ For a review of the positions of critical theory, see François Châtelet, Olivier Duhamel and Evelyne Pisier, *Histoire des idées politique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989, 2nd edition), 294 sq.

⁵⁷ Jürgen Habermas, "Etre résolument moderne," in *A quoi pensent les philosophes*, ed. Jacques Message, Joël Roman, and Etienne Tassin, in *Autrement*, 102 (November 1988), 24.

⁵⁸ Joseph de Maistre, *Oeuvres complètes* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1979, Reprint of the Lyon edition of 1884–86), 10: 8.

⁵⁹ To use Alain Finkielkraut's term with respect to another inconvenient thinker, Charles Péguy.

embodies the first far-reaching critique and complete theory of the bourgeois order that arose from the Revolution. Thus it provides a critique of democracy before the term was coined, at least before the act that founded and established it in practice: the Constitution of 1792, following the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen of 26 August 1789. Now what did it say? This above all: that democracy is not so much an act of will, of pure freedom, without conditions, but another form of domination, that of a power that does not say its name.⁶⁰ Quite the contrary, by recalling the re-examination of history, drawing on the lessons of 1789 and 1793, Maistre and the “retrograde school” (Comte)⁶¹ construct a veritable counter-thought (for lack of a counter-project), a theory rather than a doctrine properly speaking, which extends from anthropology to the political and social spheres. More than a return to the past, they thus think an *elsewhere* from the republic, at least the possibility of another history, even if it was a utopia.⁶²

In another context, the process (if not the intention) of Marcuse remains somewhat the same. By way of method, it practices the intellectual *risk* (some would say the bias) of thinking *contrarily*, against the flow. Against current climate or false facts, convenient formulas and other magic words of the dominant, indeed unique form of thinking (which Joseph, son of his time, in the eighteenth-century, still called “the general opinion, queen of the world,”⁶³ before it became simple ideology). Even if distant, the family relationship with the so-called Frankfurt School is undeniably present. Through Maistre, his equally iconoclastic reader *also* rethinks a certain failure of the Enlightenment, at the time of the modern capitalist society and cultural industry, in the midst of the Vietnam War, once the Nazi parenthesis had been closed. Against Maistre and his cold lucid thought, he nevertheless upholds (notably with Bloch and Freud) the possibility of utopia, in other words, the

⁶⁰ Isaiah Berlin offers a similar reading of Maistre, though with quite opposite purposes to Marcuse's. See, in this volume, Cyprian Blamires' essay, “Maistre, Berlin, and Fascism.”

⁶¹ See Robert Nisbet, *La tradition sociologique* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), 26.

⁶² See Michael Kohlhauser, 1793. “De la contre-révolution à l'utopie,” in 1793. *Naixement d'un nou món a l'ombra de la república*, ed. Angel Santa (Publicaciones de la Universidad de Lleida, 1996), 61–9.

⁶³ Joseph de Maistre, *Oeuvres complètes*, 11: 35.

project of a society in which the authority of reason well understood, far from denying the impulses of free life, to the contrary, will reinforce and nourish them. "Let us be realistic, let us ask for the impossible!"⁶⁴ Certainly, this 'principle of hope' is far from the authoritarian ukases or the political voluntarism of the Chamberian writer. Still ... In any case, the gesture, if not the spirit, is the same.

Consequently it is strange that the specialised literature neglects or forgets to cite the author of the *Étude sur la souveraineté* and with him retrograde thought, among the precursors of the Marcusean utopia.⁶⁵ For to think the alternative, other than the established system, Marcuse should have recourse to Hegel, Marx, Freud or the Lukacs of *Geschichte und Klassenbewusstsein* is hardly surprising. That he also thinks of Maistre is surprising only in appearance. We have just seen that the relationship between Counter-revolution and anti-establishment libertarianism is not only plausible, but also probable and even certain. At least in spirit, rather than literally. The radical critique and the common posture remain. The Maistrian word is practically virtual, powerless to express reality in any other way than in theory, in the form of revolt or refusal. The same goes for Marcuse. Faced with the established order that has become omnipresent and above all a scavenger, in the absence of a revolutionary consciousness in the supposed agent of change, the proletariat,⁶⁶ the action that he proposes is political in name only. Like that of the Savoyard thinker, it could be considered as politics in protest only, certainly pure politics, with clean hands, but without any hands.

⁶⁴ In French in the text. See as well, Herbert Marcuse, "Freiheit und Notwendigkeit. Bemerkungen zu einer Neubestimmung," and *Versuch über die Befreiung* (1969), in *Schriften*, 8: 227 and 242 sq.

⁶⁵ Thus Alain Martineau, *Herbert Marcuse's Utopia*, 27 sq., evokes Plato, Rousseau, Babeuf, Fourier, Bakunin, Marx, Luxemburg, Karl Korsch, Mannheim, and even Thomas Müntzer, the peasant leader, but never Maistre or Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon, to whom Marcuse however had devoted two important studies.

⁶⁶ See Herbert Marcuse, *Konterrevolution und Revolte*, 12, 42 sq., 51, 64, 70 and 77.

PART IV: MAISTRE'S ITALIAN POSTERITY



JOSEPH DE MAISTRE AND ITALY

Marco Ravera

It is very likely that Joseph de Maistre would not have been very much interested in the subject of the reception of his own thought in Italy.¹ He did not consider himself Italian—and, in spite of his being Francophone, he did not consider himself French either—but only and exclusively Savoyard (or rather, in the last phase of his life, Savoyard and European at the same time, but certainly not Italian). His eyes and his attention were always drawn to France; and the early impulses for the national unity of Italy that happened a few years after the Restoration—a legacy of that Napoleonic epos which he abhorred so much—left him perplexed and astonished, rather than disturbed and troubled. It is true that, given that he died at the end of February 1821, he could not witness (or, we might say, he was spared the sight of) the early risings for unity. However, his opinion in this respect is condensed, through reflections enriched by that sarcastic irony which distinguishes several of his writings, in some famous claims included in the letter to the marquis d'Azeglio² of 21 February 1821—that is, three days before his death—where, with ill-concealed scepticism, he wonders whether and to what extent one can call himself 'Italian'. After having thanked his correspondent for having sent to him a basketful of fruit, the nearly expiring lion still shows his claws and, taking his cue from some considerations on Piedmont and Italy made by d'Azeglio in the letter that accompanied the gift, added long reflections on this subject. The main point is clarified in the following quotation:

¹ A decisive help in preparing the definitive English version of this essay, based on the unpublished work originally written by me in Italian, came from my young colleague Paolo Diego Bubbio. He is more Anglophone than I, as is evident from his academic positions as Research Fellow at the University of Sydney and as Teaching Fellow at the University of Aberdeen, and from the large number of philosophical papers that he has written in English. Therefore, I am most grateful to him for his help.

² To avoid confusion, it has to be stressed that Maistre's correspondent was the marquis Cesare Taparelli d'Azeglio (1763–1830), father of the better known Massimo d'Azeglio, who was his fifth son. The latter is particularly remembered for the famous *Lettera sul romanticismo* (*Letter on Romanticism*), written to him by Alessandro Manzoni in 1823.

The greatest misfortune to a nation is certainly to have to obey to another,... The wise man who meditates upon this huge problem does not really know what to think when someone mentions the Italian spirit (or that Italian unity one sometimes hears about),... seeing what a fear-some catastrophe it would be necessary to go through in order to revive Italy. This country is paying dearly for the *terrible* unity that once tore the world to shreds.

Here Maistre is clearly referring to the force-fed unity of the Napoleonic Empire. And with regard to the role of Piedmont, he goes on with irritating comments, which were in countertendency with respect to the spirit of the age, and nevertheless somehow prophetic:

Piedmont is in itself a whole that cannot blend with anything. ... It cannot even increase its extension, as the land that would be added to it would be a foreign land that Piedmont should rule, and it would never be a part of Piedmont itself. Therefore, it can exist only in two ways: either as it is and as it has always been, in its old and current dimensions ..., or dragged into a general revolution, which would make it the province of a great State. ... And it would be quite a political problem to examine whether Piedmont could be happier and more flourishing as a great province or as a small State. As far as I am concerned, I would opt for the second option... I don't delude myself, and I know (as I know that three angles of a triangle equal two right angles)... that the throne cannot be higher *without being more distant*.³

Therefore, the idea of Italy as a unified (or, better, unifiable) nation was something completely extraneous to the political view of Maistre, who, as is known, in the last period of his meditation was rather looking at the possibility of a Europe somehow united and pacified in a sort of confederation of states that should have had the Pope as an arbiter to solve their disputes: a utopian dream of "perpetual peace" in clear countertendency with respect to the system of the Congress of Vienna, a police system that, although nourished with quasi-mystical elements in the view of Czar Alexander and of some of its inspirers, among whom Franz von Baader played a prominent role, was interpreted more concretely and pragmatically in Vienna and Berlin. Maistre was and always remained quite sceptical about the efficacy, solidity, and durability of the restoration plan conceived at the Congress of Vienna; in this respect he was always of a divided and contradictory inner disposition. It was the contradiction of a man who, eventually returned from Russia to Turin and attending a Council with King Vittorio

³ Joseph de Maistre, *Oeuvres complètes*, 14: 256–9.

Emanuele I in which several ministers seemed to have given in to the impulse to elaborate more and more projects, burst out saying the famous and lapidary sentence: "Gentlemen! The earth is quaking, and you want to build?" Exactly: "the earth was quaking," and the early impulses for Italy's national unity, somehow perceived by Maistre, did not represent for him anything but an aspect of this earthquake. The revolution, of which Napoleon was an effect and for which the Congress of Vienna was a totally insufficient and inadequate (if not naïve) response, *allait son train*. Men could certainly not stop it before it exhausted its force, propulsive and dissolving at the same time; and certainly it could not be stopped by the projects of the ministers of the Kingdom of Sardinia.

"Prophet of the past"⁴—as he was sharply defined with a completely paradoxical expression that he would not have rejected⁵—insofar as he was linked to the *ancien régime*, like all the *great* conservatives (as opposed, or better antithetical, to the *mediocre* conservatives, who merely looked at the past), Maistre looked to the past *and* to the remotest future *at the same time*. But he was essentially unable to see the immediate future, that "immediate" future which resulted, in about half a century, in the unification of Italy, a country that most likely for him was nothing more than "a geographical expression" (as claimed by Prince Clemens von Metternich), which therefore excluded the Alps and, at best, started from the Po valley. This was, by the way, in accordance with a consolidated and universal view, at least before the Risorgimento. Goethe, for example, in *Italian Journey*, does not consider himself to be in "the land where lemons bloom" until he arrives in Verona (14 September 1786), as he ponders while looking back towards the Adige valley that he just descended, which, although languages "start to blend" in its southern part, is still Tirol, up to the last rocky cliffs that lead to the green plain. After all, in the utopian view of European unity mentioned above—not realized thanks to the force of Napoleon's bayonets and guns—but grounded on religion, what importance should the persisting division of the Italian peninsula in several States, some larger and some smaller, have ever had for Maistre, once this division had been overcome and embraced by a really "European" peace?

⁴ On Maistre's reputation as a "prophet of the past," see, in this volume, Kevin Erwin's essay, "*Le mystique de la tradition: Barbey Worships at the Altar of Joseph de Maistre.*"

⁵ Claude-Joseph Gignoux, *Joseph de Maistre, prophète du passé, historien de l'avenir* (Paris: Nouvelles éditions latines, 1963).

In the medium term, however—and we ourselves do not know yet what will happen in the “long” term (although it is true that we now live in a Europe that is somehow “unified,” not by religion and even less by weapons, but in a completely secular way by money, and the role of arbiter is not assigned to the Pope, but to the managers of the European Central Bank)—everything went against his predictions, his hopes, and his expectations. Thus Italy was united as a State, eventually attacking with weapons the same Papacy that Maistre would have wished as an arbiter and a superior and impartial judge of European destinies, and making a rift between State and Church (in a country whose great majority was Catholic) that only after another half a century would have found a relative (and essentially all but solid) composition in the Lateran Pacts. And the role played by the *Liberi Muratori* (and by the other secret societies connected with them) in the events that led to national unity (as the most recent and shrewdest historiography, such as Denis Mack Smith’s work, has shown with several documents and arguments) represents a crowning irony, if we think of the complex love-and-hate relationship that Maistre had with Freemasonry, a relationship that clearly emerges from the dialogue between the Senator and the Count in *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*. In short, once again, Wilhelmsbad’s “secular” party had won, and the wing to which Maistre belonged was on the losing side.⁶

⁶ The theme of the Masonic militancy of the young Maistre, his illusions in this respect, his membership in the mystical-esoteric Lodges that were not in conflict with the Roman Church, his encounter and fight with Martinism, and his ‘indirect’ participation to the Congress of Wilhelmsbad (which was the place of a heated debate between the ‘rationalist’ and the ‘mystical-illuminist’ tendencies of Freemasonry, and in which the latter was defeated) is documented by the *Mémoire* addressed to the Duke of Brunswick by Maistre himself for the occasion. Volumes have been written on this subject, particularly in France, by Vermale, Dermenghem, Vuillaud, and, above all, the research published in the *Revue des études maistriennes* thanks to the untiring activity of Jean-Louis L. Darcel, and particularly in the precious 1979–1980 issue, including the Proceedings of the Chambéry Congress held in 1979 on *Lumières et maçonnerie dans la seconde moitié du XVIIIe siècle*. Here I can mention this subject only briefly; however, it has to be stressed that some important contributions in this respect have also been published in Italy. Although strictly speaking the excellent works of Jean Rebotton, a scholar from Val d’Aosta, cannot be included in “Italian” historiography, either because they have been published in Italy but written in French (such as the *Études maistriennes* (Aosta: Bibliothèque de l’Archivum Augustanum, 1975)), or because they have been published abroad (such as the *Écrits maçonniques*, Geneva: Slatkine, 1983), it is worthwhile to mention at least some parts of the Proceedings of the Congress *Joseph de Maistre between Enlightenment and Restoration*, which was held in Turin in

Thus, unified Italy, its culture, and its historiography did not forget to return the discourtesy to him who had so clearly shown that he was not taking seriously their very possibility; and for some decades a deafening silence, not significantly interrupted by irrelevant works (such as Giuseppe Saredo's monograph, published in Turin in 1860), wrapped the work of a thinker whom Rosmini—who today has been beatified (maybe because he has been “normalised”?), but, at that time, was another “problematic” character, as is well known, both for the Church and the State—defined as “saint De Maistre.” The Holy See had already looked suspiciously and warily at *Du pape*, despite an almost immediate Italian translation, together with the translation of *De l'église gallicane*, both edited by Giuseppe Marchetti and Giovanni Benacci and published in Imola in 1822 and 1823—but they are almost useless and unreliable works, as it often happens with nineteenth-century translations. In short, the lack of interest of Italy for him who, for his part, had not shown any interest in Italy itself, was total for a long time.

In fact, it is necessary to go so far as to the twentieth century (and the late twentieth century) in order to find Maistre's name in works by Italian philosophers and historians, or by Italian interpreters of his thought. This happens according to a twofold trend. On the one hand there is the historiographical and documental interest, which re-emerges and is expressed in new editions or better translations of some of his main works, and above all in the attempt to set such a difficult, outdated and ‘distant’ figure in his historical background, through monographs and specialist studies that are often valuable. On the other hand—and this is what is most interesting for the purpose of this essay—there is the progressing discovery of his underground influence on important trends of twentieth-century Italian philosophy, even of the second half of it, which, *prima facie*, could seem completely

1974 and published the following year by the Centro Studi Piemontesi. The proceedings are multilingual because of the participation, besides the Italians Gianni Perona, Mario d'Addio, Enrico De Mas, Maria Teresa Bovetti Pichetto, Mirella Lolli Larizza, Alexandre Passerin d'Entrèves, and Luigi Marino (who was the organiser of the event and editor of the volume), of important foreign scholars such as Robert Triomphe, Richard A. Lebrun, and Jean René Derré. The late lamented Luigi Marino, who was the author of several important works on counter-revolutionary thought and, more generally, on the philosophy of Restoration (he had the merit of having once again brought to scholars' attention a central figure such as Gentz), wrote the useful general introduction to the collection, which obviously dealt extensively with Maistre (*La filosofia della Restaurazione*, Turin: Loescher, 1978).

extraneous to his broad view. Therefore, it is worthwhile to analyse separately these two levels of Maistre's presence in Italy.

The historiographical and documentary level can be approached by noting the increasing number of volumes that appeared in the new century, consisting in a presentation of Maistre's major works to the Italian public. These translations were definitely more reliable and philologically valid than those published in the early nineteenth century, and often accompanied by a good critical apparatus and well documented introductions. If an early translation of the *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (published in Città di Castello in 1921) still presents several limits typical of nineteenth-century translations, the volume edited by Roberto de Mattei and Agostino Sanfratello (Milan: Scheiwiller, 1975) is excellent. The same can be said for the comparison between the second Italian translation of *Du pape*, published in Florence in 1926, and the excellent and (we can certainly say) definitive Italian translation made by Carlo Pasquali (based on the critical French edition by Jacques Lovie and Joannès Chetail), edited and magisterially introduced by Carlo Bo (Milan: Rizzoli, 1984). The robust maturity of the philological sensibility in the second half of the century clearly produced its fruits. And if an isolated translation of the *Cinq paradoxes*⁷ (edited by Aurelio Saffi, published in Brescia in 1954) is not particularly relevant, there are other two very recent Italian editions, the first published by Solfanelli in 2005 and the second by Morcelliana in 2009. And *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* has been translated twice in less than ten years: the first translation edited by Gennaro Auletta and published in Milan in 1959 and reprinted in Turin in 1966, and the second, excellent indeed (and, as such, 'definitive'), edited by Alfredo Cattabiani and translated by Lorenzo Fenoglio and Anna Rosso Cattabiani (Milan: Rusconi, 1971 and 1986). And one should not forget the very useful collection of writings provided by the *Grande antologia filosofica* in the section on *I tradizionalisti francesi* (Milan: Marzorati 1971, edited by Maria Adelaide Raschini, with a long introductory essay), in the volumes *I controrivoluzionari*, edited by Carlo Galli (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1981, accompanied by a long introductory essay that also represents an effort to draw a comprehensive interpretation), and *Il pensiero politico di Joseph de Maistre* by Domenico Fisichella

⁷ The title of this work is now known to have been *Six paradoxes*. This is the title under which it has been published in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, ed. Pierre Glaudes.

(Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1993), which includes, besides a masterly reading of the fundamental theoretical issues of Maistrian thought, large sections of the (never previously translated) *De la souveraineté du peuple*. Then, in 1999, there was *De la souveraineté du peuple*, published, edited by Riccardo Albani (Naples: Editoriale scientifica). And some years earlier, in 1985, Massimo Boffa had offered a new and rich Italian edition, with critical introduction and notes, of the *Considérations sur la France* (Rome: Editori Riuniti). Also, the collection of selected writings from the letters of the Russian period is very interesting.⁸ Then mention must be made of the success of two Italian editions of the *Lettres à un gentilhomme russe sur l'Inquisition espagnole*, which is definitely the most brilliant, contestable, and contested of Maistre's works (but perhaps for this very reason it has been successfully offered to a large public that is always more and more interested in such topics and fascinated by witch hunts and similar subjects): the first edited by Antonio Piras (Rimini: Il Cerchio, 1998) and the second, very recent but consisting in the reprint of an old anonymous translation made in 1823, published in San Donato Milanese by Pizeta in 2009. And again, in 2000, Il Cerchio published the *Breviary of tradition*, edited by Alfredo Cattabiani (who also was the editor of *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*).

As is evident, publications become more frequent, particularly in recent years. It would be also possible to make the list longer, but the purpose of this essay is not only, or mainly, to provide a bibliography, neither a complete nor a selective one. Rather, it has to be noted how the fact that these translations followed on one another is a symptom (and this is the only reason why I wanted to stress it) of a renovated, or perhaps completely new, interest, of a different sensibility, which has led historians to question the role of the Savoyard, and philosophers (who fortunately are now often inured to perfunctory neo-Enlightenment dismissals, which unfortunately are still present in several history of philosophy textbooks, and which are marked by the clichéd and trivial categories of 'reaction' and 'irrationalism') and to re-think, sometimes originally, this or that aspect of his thought.⁹

⁸ Maistre, *Napoleone, la Russia, l'Europa. Dispacci da Pietroburgo (1811-1813)*, ed. Grazia Farina and Ernesto Galli della Loggia (Rome: Donzelli, 1994).

⁹ The following are important Italian contributions that present different approaches to the debate regarding the so-called Maistrian 'irrationalism': Maria Luisa Pesante, *Un inedito di Walter Maturi: il pensiero di Giuseppe de Maistre*, in *Miscellanea Walter Maturi* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1966), 1-13; and Luigi Derla, *Joseph de Maistre e l'irrazionalismo*, in *Studi francesi*, 44 (1971), later included in *Letteratura e politica tra*

Rather, the question could be *why* one has to await the twentieth century, and even the *late* twentieth century, to witness such a revived interest. Maybe is it because Maistre is the eternal (and, in this sense, super-historical) witness of a world in crisis, so that, in order to turn to him and listen to him, and to learn to somehow agree with him, we need, in turn, to perceive ourselves as belonging to a world in crisis? Of course, he appears as an interpreter of the twentieth century, more than an interpreter of that nineteenth century which, at least from 1848 onwards, was substantially extraneous to him, although he lived the last twenty years of his life in it: the striking intuition of the 'dialectic of Enlightenment' that causally connects the 'human rights' with the Terror and the guillotine; the prophetic vision regarding the danger of totalitarianism as the violent implosion of instrumental and logical reason abandoned to itself, 'freed' by the *sweet chains* and hence sinking into nihilism; the fundamental despair, ill-concealed by the unshakeable certainties of those who, perhaps, *need* to believe and *want* to believe more than they effectively *believe*; and, not least, a thought whose reasoning is grounded more on the *paradox* than on *ratio*: all this really makes him "one of us" (as Cioran writes¹⁰), more relevant for our world in contraction and decline than for a nineteenth-century world still relying on its "grand destinies and progressive hopes."¹¹ And if the 'long century' implodes in 1918, it is not by chance that the writings of the interpreter of the crisis, whose thought was end-to-end an expression of the crisis and an attempt to exorcise it, found new readers as early as the thirties of the 'short century'.

Of course, with regard to a survey of Italian literature—and with an emphasis on specialist studies and monographs—not all the works are

la Restaurazione e l'Unità (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1977), 65–91. An illuminating and lucid reflection on a Maistre considered not as a 'reactionary' and a 'liberticide', but as someone whose thought can suggest a dialectic of freedom alternative to the concept of 'freedom' proposed by the Enlightenment and by the modern rationalism, can be found in Paolo Pastori, "Joseph de Maistre e la libertà," in *Rivista internazionale di filosofia del diritto* (1978): 336–58.

¹⁰ Emile M. Cioran, *Joseph de Maistre* (Paris: Editions du Rocher, 1957), later republished in *Exercices d'admiration* (Paris: Gallimard, 1957, 1986).

¹¹ In Italian, "magnifiche sorti e progressive," an expression used by the Italian poet Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), which is ironically used in one of his last poems (*La Ginestra*), to refer to the false knowledge of a "presumptuous and silly century" ("secol superbo e sciocco"), which has forgotten that the power of Nature can destroy very quickly all the human illusions of happiness and progress, in the same way in which Vesuvius destroyed the surrounding Roman cities.

of equal value. There are, for example, relatively naïve contributions, which are not despicable; they are correct in terms of a mere exposition of Maistrian doctrines, but invalidated by an apologetics unbearably aimed at proving the Count right and, therefore, devoid of any critical and interpretative distance—as is the case of Bruno Brunello's book *Joseph de Maistre politico e filosofo* (Bologna: Patron, 1967). But there are also ridiculous attempts to establish a connection between Maistre's authority principle and fascism, such as Saverio Nasalli Rocca's book *Giuseppe de Maistre nei suoi scritti* (Torino: Bocca, 1933), which is, by the way, full of mistakes and unacceptable oversights even from a historiographical point of view. Catholic apologetics and fascist totalitarianism: both of these worlds believed they could take possession of Maistre and make him their own champion, especially in Italy. In this way, they fell into opposite and yet similar (and in both cases crushing) errors of perspective, as they saw unilaterally now the one now the other of the faces of that two-faced Janus who—to quote Cioran again—was at the same time Nietzsche and Paul of Tarsus. Each of the two faces turns out to be unbearably deformed, however, if one wants to see only one while hiding the other; and in fact, the paradox consists in the fact that they can be perceived only *together*, in their indissoluble unity, a unity that—as I am going to show—takes for this very reason the shape of a *tragic* unity. The essentially *tragic* dimension of Maistre's thought is the reason why I think it is appropriate to reject any causal relation between it and fascist totalitarianism; to reject it not only when this relation is positively affirmed—as in the aforementioned case of the unacceptable and misleading book by Nasalli Rocca, which in the bargain is also dedicated “to the Duce”!—, but also when it is addressed in the context of a comprehensive diagnosis of the totalitarian illness that was infecting Europe—as it happens in Piero Gobetti's work. For, as I want to reiterate, if it is true that Maistre somehow “foresees” and “foretells” totalitarianism, this does not mean at all that he “wishes” or “paves the way” for it, precisely because he recognises in it the final result of the Enlightenment and of the human autonomy and rebellion: that rebellion whose first sign was represented by the revolutionary Terror. Moreover, the Maistrian principle of the *authority* conferred by God for the sake of the world is anything but that totalitarian violence (regardless of its political motive) which brutally affirms the power of man over man.

Nevertheless, we also find other scholars, of remarkable intellectual stature, completely extraneous to apologetic ambitions and

embezzlements. Important works with a focus on historico-philosophical and philosophico-political aspects are Teresa Serra's book *L'utopia controrivoluzionaria. Aspetti del cattolicesimo "antirivoluzionario" in Francia (1796-1830)* (Naples: Guida, 1977), Vincenza Petyx's book *I selvaggi in Europa. La Francia rivoluzionaria di Maistre e Bonald* (Naples: Bibliopolis 1987), and the contributions by Sandro Chignola (a scholar who is well known especially for his expertise in Bonald's philosophy and for his 1993 monograph on this subject).¹² It has to be recalled, however (and this opens a huge problem that we will face later on), that many years earlier, Benedetto Croce also took an interest in Maistre. In *Uomini e cose della vecchia Italia* (Bari: Laterza, 1927; later reprinted, after an author's revision, in 1943, and again in 1956) Croce focused (among other things) on the letters between Maistre and the Duke of Serracapriola, an interesting testimony of the opinions regarding the situation of Italy from the point of view of two men of the *ancien régime* of different origins, one a Savoyard and the other a Bourbonist.

In fact, Maistre's name recurs (although not frequently) in Croce's writings. The question of whether elements of Maistre's thought could have influenced Italian historicism (especially Crocian historicism) has been legitimately raised. This question has been particularly discussed by Fisichella, in his 1993 volume mentioned above, with arguments that can be hardly disputed. Furthermore, it should be mentioned that Fisichella is also the author of some of the most important Maistrian studies in Italy, among which *Giusnaturalismo e teoria della sovranità in Joseph de Maistre* (Messina-Florence: D'Anna, 1963), later included in *Politica e mutamento sociale* (Lungro di Cosenza: Constantino Marco Editore, 2002), and the more recent *Joseph de Maistre pensatore*

¹² Sandro Chignola, *Il concetto controrivoluzionario di potere e la logica della sovranità*, in Giuseppe Duso, ed., *Il Potere. Per la storia della filosofia politica moderna* (Roma: Carocci, 1999); and *I controrivoluzionari e il diritto moderno*, in Marco Cavina and Francesco Belvisi, *Diritto e filosofia nel XIX secolo* (Milan: Giuffrè, 2002). The mentioned important monograph is *Società e costituzione. Teologia e politica nel sistema di Bonald* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1993): this was the gem of Bonaldian studies in Italy, which then developed with the works of scholars mentioned above, such as Teresa Serra and Vincenza Petyx, and which developed further, in the following years, with Barberis (Giorgio Barberis, *Louis de Bonald. Potere e ordine tra sovversione e Provvidenza* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2007) and others. However, and despite the great similarity between Maistre and Bonald (the two "Dioscuri of counter-revolution"), we cannot extend our survey here to the latter.

européo (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2005), which can be considered his main work on this topic.

In his very precise analysis, Fisichella basically distinguishes three interpretative lines regarding the problem of the alleged relation between Maistre and historicism. The first line, mainly represented by Carl Schmitt, sees the Maistrian principle of sovereignty as grounding decisionism, so that Maistre would be “the theorist of crude realism, of the authoritative decision, as mere act and fact, as deed of pure power” which, at best, establishes history, but is not included in it.

The second interpretative line sees in Maistre’s thought “a neat closure to historical development..., hence the lack of understanding of the *meaning of history* and of its direction”: and here, in relation to the survey of Italian scholarship, Fisichella refers to Furio Diaz’s¹³ interpretations (according to which in Maistre “the historiographical interpretation is fostered by passionate motives, and the attraction for practical positions and ethico-political beliefs appears as unmediated, scarcely purified and elaborated by a process of historical reflections”); to Paolo Treves¹⁴ (who emphasises Maistre’s “despair” about the insoluble contrast between thoughts and historical facts, that is, about the inflexible doctrinal coherence disproved by reality); and to Carlo Galli (who, although he acknowledges in Maistre a sort of “unwitting clear-sightedness,” underlines his “political blindness,” his anachronism, “his intimate theoretical inconsistency and logical impossibility” and, hence, “the historical and existential anguish that necessarily follows from all this.”

The third interpretative approach that is identified and discussed by Fisichella is more specifically aimed to answer the question mentioned above. This interpretative approach tends to see “in the Maistrian speculative construct a contribution of ideas that has directly opened the doors to modern historicism.”¹⁵ In Italy, this thesis has been supported by Giorgio del Vecchio, who defines the Maistrian perspective as a veritable “political historicism,”¹⁶ and by Carlo Antoni,¹⁷ who maintains

¹³ Furio Diaz, *Rivoluzione e controrivoluzione*, in Luigi Firpo, ed., *Storia delle Idee Politiche Economiche e Sociali*, 5 vols. (Turin: Utet, 1975), 4.

¹⁴ Paolo Treves, *Profeti del passato* (Florence: Barbera, 1952).

¹⁵ For accounts of other historically minded interpreters of Maistre, see, in this volume, Raphaël Cahen’s essay, “The Correspondence of Frederick von Gentz: Receiving *Du pape* in the German-Speaking World,” and Kevin Erwin’s essay, “*Le mystique de la tradition*: Barbey Worships at the Altar of Joseph de Maistre.”

¹⁶ See *Lezioni di filosofia del diritto* (Milan: Giuffrè, 1958).

¹⁷ See the volume by Carlo Antoni, *Lo storicismo* (Rome: Eri, 1957), 102–106.

that in Maistre's thought "there is a cult of History, of a superior pitiless Will" that "is translated, in the practical realm, into the crudest political realism;" it is the idea of "a history that proceeds on its own, according to its internal design," without a proper participation by man—an idea that surprisingly, and yet consequentially, "is then received by the revolutionary left, becoming one of the most effective motives of that movement that can be called "progressive historicism." Therefore, "the principle according to which history has, independently from the arbitrary will of individuals, its own predetermined and irresistible development through which everything, after all, is explained and justified" would be common to both the most severe of the 'reactionaries' and the revolutionists of the new century. Therefore, for Antoni—Fisichella argues—Maistre might be viewed within the framework of "dialectical historicism." Also, Adolfo Omodeo presents a further version of this interpretative approach when, relying on some modern Idealist scholarship that discusses the question of alleged Maistrian 'historicism,' he denies that this notion can be properly used, because in Maistre an authentic dialectic of historical development would be missing and, in his thought, "the providential moment destroys the human work." This argument is advanced, in his well-known 1939 book,¹⁸ through a polemic against those who, in relation to Maistrian works or apophthegms, "celebrate the historicistic concreteness which defeats rationalism"—although he subsequently admits, in his 1955 volume entitled *Il senso della storia*, that Maistre somehow "takes part in Historicism" together with Hegel and Marx.¹⁹

In this important debate—which is indeed important in the Italian context where, as is well known, historicism was for a long time a dominant philosophical position—Fisichella's distinctions are extremely clarifying. Therefore, it is worthwhile to quote in full the conclusive key passage of his analysis. In the suggested readings,

Maistre is simultaneously accused of being devoid of any political realism and of falling into the crudest political realism. Concretely, in these two formulations the very word "realism" assumes different meanings. In the first formulation, what is meant is that Maistre is outside of History, that is, that he follows unrepeatable worlds. In the second formulation, what is meant is that he pushes the idea of praxis of power to the extreme

¹⁸ Adolfo Omodeo, *Un reazionario, il conte J. de Maistre* (Bari: Laterza, 1939).

¹⁹ Omodeo, *Il senso della storia* (Turin: Einaudi, 1955).

forms of decisional and operational unscrupulousness, without qualms and limits of any kind.²⁰

Now, according to Fisichella, the problem is not a confutation of such unilateral readings (something that is quite obvious if one makes a deep analysis of Maistre's thought), but the advancement of another hypothesis, according to which the Maistrian reaction to the Enlightenment would be fostered "on premises derived from classical and Catholic natural law concepts, rather than from historicist premises."²¹ This reading is accepted by other scholars, such as Guido Verucci²² (who "sees in Maistrian traditionalism not a contribution to the elaboration of nineteenth-century historicism, but rather a conception in which the motives of a sort of naturalist sociology and those of a religious and transcendent providentialism converge and, in his view, are badly combined), and Roberto de Mattei²³ (who "warns against certain false contemporary readings, particularly the historicist one, upon which basically all the Italian scholars who have focused on the Savoyard thinker have dwelled"), whereas it has been demonstrated—by Fisichella himself—that "the principles of the Maistrian theory of sovereignty are connected to a veritable natural law conception." Thus, Maistre's constant reference to the lesson of history and experience, "far from concluding in an equation traditionalism = historicism, should not let one forget that the natural law is regarded as the yardstick of history, and not as its expression."²⁴

The misunderstanding of reading Maistre from the viewpoint of historicism, a misunderstanding from which Italian historiography has particularly suffered, can thus be removed, and with it the misunderstanding of his not better defined 'influence' on Italian historicism and, especially, on Croce's historicism. Personally, I think that Maistre's influences on Italian thought are of a different sort: perhaps they are more hidden and vague (and sometimes not even explicitly declared), but robust and very strong. Through mediations that are, sometimes,

²⁰ Omodeo, *Il senso della storia*, 7.

²¹ Domenico Fisichella, *Il pensiero politico di de Maistre* (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1993). This entire section is indebted to this book by Fisichella, and several passages in quotation marks refer to it.

²² Guido Verucci, *La restaurazione*, in Luigi Firpo, *op. cit.*, vol. 4, t. 2.

²³ In his Introduction to the already mentioned new Italian translation of the *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques* (Milan: Scheiwiller, 1975).

²⁴ Fisichella, *Il pensiero politico di de Maistre*, 8.

very 'faint' (as I will try to show), Maistre influenced a very specific stream of Italian thought in the late twentieth century, that is, the decisively anti-Crocian and anti-historicistic stream of Piedmontese thought, with particular reference to Augusto Del Noce and Luigi Pareyson: an influence, by the way, which plays a predominant role on the philosophico-religious level, more than on the political one.

Indeed, the better question is to identify on which line of Piedmontese philosophical thought Maistre's influence has been exerted. As is well known, this thought has developed in two directions, one focused on the primacy of ethics and politics, and the other of more properly religious inspiration. It is in the latter that we find Maistre's legacy: in that which can be defined as 'the other Turin', the less known one, the Turin of religious thinkers, as opposed to a more specifically political stream which includes Gramsci, Gobetti, and Bobbio as major figures. In fact, for instance, the thought of Mazzantini and Del Noce situates itself in ideal continuity with Savoyard-Piedmontese culture. It is a philosophico-religious tradition of thought that goes from Ornato to Gioberti and Bertini, and whose basic components can be identified in ontologism and pessimism (the latter conceived not in a merely psychological sense, but along the lines of that anthropological pessimism, which is already strongly present in Maistre, and yet anchored to a redeeming and completely super-rational hope).

Thus, if ontologism affirms a cognitive immediate relation between God and man, and poses this relation as the ground of knowledge and practice, it follows that through this relation man is defined by his finitude and, at the same time, by his participation in the divine in a horizon of mystery. There are multiple and branched versions, and here it is not possible to pursue them all: therefore, our analysis is limited to a necessarily essential and synthetic survey, to pave the way for a deeper analysis of those figures who are decisive for the purpose of this essay. Firstly, Mazzantini's thought represents an original reading of Thomistic philosophy in a rigorous dialogue with contemporary thought, focused on the value of immanence that Mazzantini intends to oppose. Guzzo's thought leads to the proposal of an idealism that is rich in Platonic and Augustinian traces and that develops in a systematic work directed towards the exploration of essential forms of spiritual life. However, as already recalled, a recurring feature of Torinese culture is represented, together with ontologism, by pessimism conceived as an authentic rejection of reconciliation with existent reality and with its evil. And it should not be forgotten that the emphasis on the centrality of the

problem of evil is owed to Martinetti, who was Piedmontese (although he taught in Milan).

Furthermore, the reflection on the problem of evil from an anthropological point of view (a specifically Maistrian problem, which pervades all Maistre's works) is at the centre of Del Noce's thought, and represents the starting point for a critical reading of modernity, focused on an original interpretation of atheism, of contemporary Marxism, and of the crisis of our age, which leads to a vindication of traditional thought.

An absolutely original investigation of the problem of evil is represented by Pareyson's 'Philosophy of Freedom', which is continued in the reflections of his student Giuseppe Riconda. From Pareyson's point of view, the question of freedom is the fundamental theme of all modern speculation, which should be fulfilled by a thorough analysis of the outcomes of Existentialism, that is, of that philosophy which has at its centre the relation of Being with freedom. Pareyson's philosophy of freedom represents the final outcome of an idea in which Existentialist appeals, a profound meditation of German Idealism (particularly of Schelling), and Russian thought (that of Dostoyevsky in particular) converge in a hermeneutic framework.

In relation to these topics, Pareyson's philosophy assumes the form of hermeneutics of religious experience related to those aspects of universality that are capable of arousing interest, if not consent, in every man and, hence, it is conceived as an effort to respond to the experience of evil and of suffering that marks human existence. It is necessary to specify, however, that Del Noce identifies in pessimism an authentic philosophical essence, and in this respect his approach is quite different from Pareyson's approach, which is presented as 'tragic thought'.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that Riconda, who is particularly sensitive to the problem of evil, is inspired by a profound and passionate meditation on Dostoyevsky. In fact, Riconda argues that the fight against evil has nowadays become more and more difficult and insidious. At stake is the opposition not only to an explosion of a violence which is more and more shameless and cruel, but also to the alienation of the contemporary human being, who is suffocated by a more and more incumbent technocratic totalitarianism. In spite of the success of the apologists of nihilism, Riconda thinks that there still are spaces of freedom for the human being, that is, places where the sense of a transcendent hope can be cultivated and maintained. Man can still choose, and perhaps the ultimate sense of history resides precisely

in this choice that will stay open until the end of times, so that every man, in every moment, is called to decide. Thus, he sees in Christianity the path to overcoming of contemporary nihilism. Nevertheless, this overcoming remains problematic, since it requires a constant investigation and confrontation with the atheist standpoint, because both of them lose topicality and significance if they do not take into consideration their reciprocal possibility.²⁵

To recapitulate: reference to tradition, thematisation of evil, and absolute necessity of the choice for or against Christianity. All these themes are genuinely Maistrian, intimately connected with each other, and even coessential; and we find them, differently presented in their reciprocal relation but always coexistent, in this particular line of thought.

A clarifying preamble is now proper and necessary before proceeding to the final part of our analysis. Here I by no means want to present the complex and multiform scenario of Piedmontese philosophico-religious thought in the twentieth century as a direct Maistrian legacy: this would be absolutely misleading—not only reductive, but mistaken. Not at all: the origins and connections of Piedmontese twentieth-century thought are various and manifold, as much so as its leading figures. Rather, my goal is to investigate whether it is possible to discover an underground presence of Maistre (in the way one can, so to say, see a watermark only when paper is held up to the light): a Maistre who is, by the way, quite rarely recalled or cited.

For instance, Del Noce, who like no one else in contemporary thought (at least in Italy) insisted on the necessity of rethinking tradition, conceived in a Christian spirit, as the way of stemming nihilism or, better, as the only authentic, lively, and vital alternative to nihilism, rarely cited Maistre's name in his works. The explicit origins of his ontologism are different and (to keep this analysis short, although the stature of this figure would require a more extended treatment) they are to be traced back to that line of thought which derives from Gioberti, and in the confrontation of this line with Marxism and with

²⁵ Regarding this brief introductory synthesis, I refer to the (still unpublished) research pursued by Francesca Volpe, a young scholar from the University of Turin, who has fruitfully focused on this line of thought (I quote quite literally from her work), and with whom I had the chance to converse extensively about this topic. In order to not be too modest, I allow myself to mention that my book *Joseph de Maistre pensatore dell'origine* (Milan: Mursia, 1986) can be ascribed to this interpretative line.

Gentile's Actual Idealism, conceived as different and opposed, and yet complementary, forms of modern immanentism. Immanentism, atheism, and nihilism, are nothing but further moments of the same movement of thought, as it is shown in Del Noce's 1964 masterpiece, *Il problema dell'ateismo* (Bologna: Il Mulino).

Now, where does immanentism come from, where does it originate? It comes from the "Cartesian ambiguity," deeply scrutinized and, so to say, dissected by Del Noce in *Riforma cattolica e filosofia moderna*, published in 1965 (Bologna: Il Mulino). Descartes' introduction of the 'principle of immanence,' which in a completely ambiguous and even contradictory way requires for its foundation 'rational arguments' for the existence of God, ends up making the demonstration of such existence completely instrumental and, therefore, substantially extraneous to the real Christian intention. The alternative to this standpoint is represented by Pascal, who always remains in the background as an 'alternative beginning' of modern philosophy. Modern philosophy developed, in its mainstream lines, by developing and strengthening the Cartesian legacy up to the complete explication of the principle of immanence in the great rationalistic systems of the nineteenth century, particularly Hegel's. And the principle of immanence, now transformed into metaphysical rationalism, is reversed (indeed, quite coherently) in Marxism, and at the same time it generates, as a repercussion, Nazi-fascist totalitarianism. In this way, the principle of immanence consigns the world to the fight between two ideologies that are both, in their fundamental origin, nihilistic and anti-Christian, the former because it regards itself as the last and definitive, completely worldly incarnation of Christianity; the latter because it sees in Christianity, and even more in its early Jewish origin, the enemy that has to be defeated.

In short, ideology and totalitarianism, both mature fruits of the principle of immanence, are intrinsically anti-Christian, and their characteristic inclination is nihilism, which is properly what is left and remains after their implosion, of which Del Noce offers a very sharp interpretation in *Il suicidio della Rivoluzione* (Milan: Rusconi, 1978). This is a harsh and difficult book, very densely problematic and yet prophetic, if one thinks that it was published for the first time ten years before the collapse of the Soviet Union. A collapse that happened on its own, as is well known, precisely because of an internal implosion, because of consumption, and was not caused by shocks and traumas originated from the outside. It was an emptying, so to say, that precisely

two centuries later reminds us of the impressive and lucid Maistrian prediction that represents the final achievement of the *Considérations sur la France*, where it is stated that “the counter-revolution will not be a *contrary revolution*, but the *contrary of revolution*.”

Indeed, the same *pathos* can be grasped in Del Noce’s book mentioned above, and nevertheless—as in Maistre’s work, once again—there is no triumphalism vis-à-vis the sure end of the revolutionary development of the principle of immanence, but rather pessimism, since the revolution that proceeds on its way in the ‘winning’ West is nihilism—first creeping nihilism, and then triumphant nihilism, as it is now present not only in philosophers’ books, but in that common feeling which the books written by philosophers (or by the majority of those who claim to be philosophers) reflect, fondle, allure, and confirm at the same time. Therefore, there is not so much Maistre in Del Noce, if one looks at the *letter* of his writings—although Maistrian quotes significantly increase, from the first to the last of the books mentioned above—but there is the concrete possibility, I believe, to perceive his pervasive presence. In fact, all the themes that we have succinctly identified in Del Noce are already Maistrian themes, although they sometimes flash undeveloped in Maistre’s work. Moreover, these themes are recognisable in the more recent political thought of Vittorio Mathieu,²⁶ another leading figure of the Torinese school—although they importantly differ because of an emphasis on the ‘Gnostic’ aspects of modern rationalism and revolutionism; Gnostic, and thus, once again, anti-Christian, but in the sense that they refer to a ‘different’ possibility for the development of Christianity, which was interrupted in its appearance, but which is always ready to emerge again, like a karst underground torrent.

Furthermore, brave and harsh questioning about the problem of evil is the central subject in the last phase of Luigi Pareyson’s thought, which is represented in the writings collected in the posthumous volume *Ontologia della libertà* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995). It is important to recall that the affirmation of this theme does not represent a ‘turn’ in the development of Pareyson’s thought, but something somehow present since the beginning and through the other phases of his thought: the

²⁶ In this regard I want to recall at least *La speranza nella Rivoluzione* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1972), second edition (Rome: Armando, 1992); and *Cancro in Occidente* (Milan: Editoriale Nuova, 1980, 1983).

first phase, which can be summarily defined 'existentialist' (culminating in *Esistenza e persona*, 1950; but the final edition, enriched by important retrospective elements, is the 1985 one, which was published in Genova by Melangolo); and the 'hermeneutic' phase (culminating in *Verità e interpretazione* (Milan: Mursia, 1971). It is also important to recall that Pareyson's last phase is grounded on an original and fruitful re-examination of the late Schelling, who also focused on the problem of evil, at least since the 1809 *Philosophische Untersuchungen*. Unfortunately, because of space limitations, it is not possible to dwell upon these issues; rather, I will focus on the impressive similarity that can be noted between Pareyson's response to the problem of evil, and that offered by Joseph de Maistre (who, once again, is not explicitly mentioned).

According to Pareyson, who refers to Schelling, evil, which is present as a rejected and defeated possibility in God himself, is awakened and reactivated by man through original sin: a mystery which is rationally unfathomable, and yet so serious and powerful that it represents an authentic 'cosmotheandric' cataclysm. It is something that not only hurts human existence, but compromises the whole creation and, hence, involves God himself. Thus, human guilt marks everything that exists so deeply, that it can be redeemed only by suffering, and surely it cannot be corrected and healed by reason. Since, however, human strengths and the human capacity to suffer are not enough to fill the abyss that man himself has created, God's free and voluntary assumption of suffering (through the incarnation of Christ) compensates for it.

This movement of thought is supported, in Pareyson's thought (and this is precisely what is of most interest here), by a passionate meditation on Dostoyevsky's work, which culminates in the famous 1982 essay *La sofferenza inutile*, later included in the posthumous volume *Dostoyevsky. Filosofia, romanzo ed esperienza religiosa* (Turin: Einaudi, 1993). Here, starting from the fiery dialogue between Ivan and Alyosha Karamazov, a principle is affirmed, that of the universally redeeming value of suffering and of the meaning that this suffering assumes when, from the point of view of human and 'Euclidean' reason, it can appear totally absurd, meaningless, unjustified and unjustifiable, as it does in the case of the suffering of children and innocent people (this principle is then used again by Pareyson in his 1988 work *Filosofia della libertà*). Suffering is not only meaningful:

Suffering is the setting for the solidarity between God and humanity: only in suffering can God and humanity join their efforts. It is extremely

tragic that only in suffering does God succeed in helping humanity, and that only in suffering does humanity manage to redeem itself and raise itself to God. But it is precisely in the mutual suffering of divinity and humanity that it is revealed to be the only force that can get the better of evil. This principle is one of the founding premises of tragic thought: between humanity and God there can be no collaboration in grace if there has not already been collaboration in suffering; without suffering, the world seems enigmatic, and life absurd; without suffering, evil remains unredeemed and joy inaccessible. By virtue of that mutual suffering it is manifested as the living connection between divinity and humanity, as a new *copula mundi*; and it is for this reason that suffering must be considered the pivot of the rotation from negative to positive, the rhythm of freedom, the heart of history, the pulsation of the real, and the link between time and eternity; in short, a bridge thrown between *Genesis* and *Apocalypse*, between the divine origination and the apocatastasis.²⁷

Here, in this impressive conclusive passage from Pareyson's posthumous 1995 book, in a context so different and apparently distant—but not so distant if, as it seems certain by now, Dostoyevsky had read Maistre's work and, in any case, Maistre's thought had deeply penetrated Russian spirituality²⁸—the Maistrian *mystery of reversibility* of the suffering of the innocent for the sake of the guilty ones occurs again: a mystery that represents for Maistre—and also for Pareyson, who is very clear on this point—the core of Christianity and the fulcrum of a choice for or against Christianity itself. Perhaps, following René Girard, one could object that in both cases, despite the due differences, we are dealing with a 'sacrificial' account of Christianity; and there is no doubt that this issue can be discussed, but it is not possible to deny the substantial affinity of thought of the two *Savoyards* (Maistre and Pareyson), that Dostoyevsky's meditation makes so close and consonant to the reader.

As it has already been recalled, Dostoyevsky's meditation also vivifies Giuseppe Riconda's most recent thought. Riconda is close to Pareyson as well as to Del Noce, and he is able to go through and originally develop their legacy, insofar as he 'grafts' one perspective onto the other, especially in relation to the reflection on the problem of evil,

²⁷ Luigi Pareyson, *Ontologia della libertà* (Turin: Einaudi, 1995), 478; English trans. *Existence, Interpretation, Freedom: Selected Writings*, ed. Paolo Diego Bubbio and trans. Anna Mattei (Aurora, CO: Davies Group, Publishers, 2009), 253–4.

²⁸ See Vera Miltchyna, "Joseph de Maistre's Works in Russia: A Look at their Reception," in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 241–70.

the reference to tradition, and the demand for a new discovery of Christianity, and he is able to make these perspectives converge onto one another.

Riconda is, in every aspect, the most faithful and, at the same time, the most original heir of Pareyson's lesson, which has been mostly distorted and, so to say, reversed by those of his (direct or indirect) epigones who, through the 'weak thought' (and through—allow me to call it with the name it deserves—the contamination of Derrida's *virus*), have ended up by allowing the flourishing, within his own school, of precisely that 'image of the mind' which Pareyson himself abhorred more than any other and in which he saw (identifying its image in Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed*) the supreme danger, that is, the satisfied and pacified nihilism (which today speaks, so to say, from that which once was Pareyson's own chair). Riconda, therefore, represents the alternative (an alternative to which it is necessary to rally around) to such a nihilistic drift, which settled into the legacy of a thought that, more than any other, had scrutinised and dissected nihilism to its very bowels, since, following Dostoyevsky's example, it not only fought against it, but also 'went through' it.

The titles of Riconda's last two books are meaningful: *Tradizione e avventura* (Torino: SEI, 2001), and the very recent *Tradizione e pensiero* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso, 2009). But what is that 'traditional' thought which, according to Riconda, can not only stem nihilism, but represent a lively and perennial alternative to it? Surely not the classical, ontological metaphysics, whose renewed purpose is always, after Heidegger, a hanging back, which can be noble, but is fundamentally fruitless; rather, it is an anthropological conception, which defines man in its relation with Being and truth, in a horizon of mystery and in a situation of sin. Hence, a religious but not irrational idea and, most of all, not a mere set of 'past' truths, but a perennial, and therefore meta-historical, set of principles that are always capable of renovating themselves and of accepting new challenges, drawing from an infinite inexhaustibility that makes such principles capable of illuminating every new and different historical situation. It is the inexhaustibility of the origin, of Being, and of truth—which Riconda admits to reading theologically, or better religiously and in the Christian spirit—that demands from man an ever-new 'creative fidelity': a fidelity that is not a mere clinging to past certainties, but a continuous fight, which is dramatic and constantly exposed to failure. Traditional thought is not static but—and here I use a typical Maistrian metaphor, which seems

to be totally appropriate—is a thought that lives *in* time without feeding exclusively *on* time; it is the ‘opposite stream’ that, while it falls into the torrent, goes upstream toward the origin. However, this challenge can be accepted, and even won, upon the condition that one does not surrender to the Medusa’s gaze of that modern rationalism which, by domesticating first, and then denying the mystery of evil and sin, really paves the way for nihilism.

Here every easy theodicy is out of play: *either evil and God, or neither evil nor God*. These are the terms of a choice that cannot be delayed or eluded, to which everyone is called: everyone, in his irreducible personality and in his unrepeatable historical situation. It is the ancient, and yet always unavoidable *either or*, which from Maistre passes to his follower Lamennais, by whom it is formulated, in relation to the indifferentism of the Enlightenment (the son of the Renaissance and seventeenth-century libertinism, and father of contemporary nihilism): *either living by faith, or dying in nothingness*. This is also Karl Barth’s *either or*, which came to him from Pascal and Kierkegaard, whose philosophies represent a lively presence in Piedmontese philosophico-religious thought; thus the historical presence of this notion allows one to better appreciate its importance and its speculative value. A speculative value that is also existential tension, in the harsh questionability of which (but without asserting, as already said, any direct derivation) Maistre would have recognised himself, since the reference to tradition, the inescapability of the problem of evil, and the unavoidability of the choice for or against Christianity, are themes that his writings keep suggesting to contemporary thought.

Undoubtedly, he would have recognised himself in the speculative value of the ‘either or’—although very few, today, are willing to acknowledge this. The apologist of war, the bard of the executioner, the herald of the alliance between throne and altar... all of these are incorruptible stereotypes, which persist and count. Perhaps it is for this reason that, even there where he is more present, he is rarely cited. This too is a paradox, which is after all worthy of him. But it is not the extreme paradox. In fact the extreme paradox, which perhaps he himself would not reject, as he might appreciate its immense ironic potential, is (to make a circular connection to the passage from his letter to d’Azeglio that I used as a preamble) that Maistre is buried here in Turin, and thus among the Piedmontese people, in the Santi Martiri Church, and precisely on the left of the entrance door, in a street whose name once was Via Dora Grossa. Today, this street is called Via Garibaldi.

PART V: MAISTRE'S RUSSIAN FATE



PREPARING THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION: MAISTRE AND UVAROV ON THE HISTORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Carolina Armenteros

Introduction

Although Joseph de Maistre's role as an educational advisor to the government of Tsar Alexander I is well known,¹ no studies exist of the longer-term and more indirect influence that the Savoyard diplomat exercised on Russian education until the end of the reign of Nicholas I (1825–55). This paper seeks to reconstruct this latter influence by examining the letters that Maistre sent to Sergei Uvarov (1786–1855) during 1810–14. A rising star in the firmament of state service when Maistre knew him, Uvarov eventually became the dominant figure of Russian education in the nineteenth century. He was curator of the St. Petersburg school district from 1810 to 1821, president of the Russian Academy of Sciences from 1818 to 1855, and minister of national enlightenment (the title borne by the minister of public education under Nicholas I) from 1833 to 1849. He was also an internationally famous scholar and fervent Orientalist who published dozens of titles on ancient subjects, some in Russian, others in German but most in French, the latter in a style universally praised for its purity. This paper examines Maistre and Uvarov's exchanges with the twofold purpose of assessing their intellectual influence on each other, and of evaluating the direct and indirect impact that their views had on Russian social, political, and educational developments until the beginning of the twentieth century.

The Maistre-Uvarov correspondence dwells extensively on the nature and history of knowledge. It speculates on the differences between criticism and synthesis, on the reconciliation of Oriental and Occidental lore, and on the ways in which knowledge is transmitted, lost, and reconstituted through time. The correspondence has been neglected until now in part because only Maistre's half survives, and because most

¹ See David W. Edwards, "Count Joseph Marie de Maistre and Russian Educational Policy, 1803–1828," *Slavic Review*, 36 (1977).

of that half is unpublished.² The content of Uvarov's letters, however, can be reconstituted from various sources. The most important are Maistre's replies, and the works that Uvarov sent to Maistre. Uvarov's epistemology is also suggested by his own actions as an educational administrator, which acquire intellectual meaning when read as texts whose meaning is "reinscribed," that is, fixed, in the same way that the meaning of words is fixed once they are written down.³ Actions leave traces, make a mark, and contribute to the emergence of patterns that become *documents*. This paper reads Uvarov's policies and educational system as intellectual texts in their own right,⁴ and as intellectual contexts of his exchanges with Maistre. It also infers Maistre's influence on Uvarov from Maistre's letters to him, and from the Maistrian works that Uvarov read, or whose contents he knew. The two men's exchanges, in addition, gain form and meaning when considering the intellectual and political context they shared, and the contemporary debates they took up in their letters. In all, detailing Maistre and Uvarov's rapport is very much an exercise in restoration.

A reconstructive approach is particularly appropriate given that the enterprise that the two men were engaged in was itself one of reconstitution. Their intellectual language was a historical theory inspired by the Oriental Renaissance of the German eighteenth century, and especially by the work of Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803) and Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829).⁵ According to this theory, God imparted to primitive humanity a revelation that had been lost and dispersed through time, and that it was now urgent to piece together again. The fragments of this divine lore were most likely to be found in antiquity and in the Orient, the cradle of the most ancient cultures, whose spiritual secrets scholarly work could unlock.

² Of the six manuscript letters kept in the Moscow State Historical Museum, only two have been published. The first, dated 26 November/8 December 1810 and consisting mostly of Maistre's comments on Uvarov's *Projet d'une académie asiatique*, was published by M. Ouharoff in Uvarov, *Études de philologie et de critique* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1844). As was common in the nineteenth century, however, the editor took liberties with the text, especially by expunging Maistre's original emphases. This paper therefore refers to the manuscript version.

³ Paul Ricoeur, "The Model of the Text: Meaningful Action Considered as a Text," *New Literary History*, 5 (1973): 91–117.

⁴ For a methodological theory of action-as-text, see also Clifford Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology* (New York: Basic Books, 1983; reprinted 2000).

⁵ For Schlegel's own reception of Maistre, see, in this volume, Adrian Daub's essay, "All Evil is the Cancellation of Unity": Joseph de Maistre and Late German Romanticism."

Orientalism in early nineteenth-century Russia accompanied a politics of non-violence.⁶ Yet the adoption of Orientalism itself was by no means a quiet process. As this paper shows, Orientalism entered Russia escorted by intense intellectual debates with strong political connotations. Maistre and Uvarov had epistolary quarrels that suggest this. They disagreed over subjects that, although diverse, pertained mostly to the nature and uses of human knowledge. These subjects were: the philosophical value of German Biblical criticism; the intellectual status of philosophy and “science,” doubly identified with the natural sciences and specialist knowledge; the importance of polemics; and the historical roles of divine knowledge. Though seemingly abstruse, these themes were politically charged. They bore directly on contemporary debates regarding Russia’s identity, and touched on questions of how to achieve this identity through political action, educational freedom, and governmental control.

Not that all was disagreement. As this paper also demonstrates, the philosophy of history that Maistre and Uvarov derived from their Orientalist and classical studies helped to determine the relative status of classical, scientific, and encyclopedic knowledge in Russia. It was designed, most specifically, at promoting anti-revolutionary *connaissances*. With time, Uvarov was able to establish a university curriculum to quell revolutions. But ironically, this curriculum produced, thanks precisely to his design and implementation—and to Maistre’s counter-revolutionary advice—the intellectual class that provided the social foundation for the Revolution of 1917. Indeed the Maistre-Uvarov correspondence suggests that, as much as the First and Second Internationals, St. Petersburg in the 1810s was a laboratory of upheaval.

The Battle for Russia’s Soul

Maistre and Uvarov began corresponding in a fiery intellectual and political atmosphere. The decade following the French Revolution coincided with the appearance of the first generation of Russian intellectuals and the birth of the desire to define a Russian national identity. Under Alexander, opinion divided among those who thought of Russia as a fundamentally Eastern and non-European land with its own

⁶ See Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680–1880*, trans. Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 449–51.

Sonderweg—those who would later be dubbed Slavophiles—and those who advocated its Westernization in the name of progress.

Maistre was associated with the former group. He attended the meetings of the Symposium of the Lovers of the Russian Word, founded in 1810 by the statesman and dilettante philologue Alexander Shishkov (1754–1841) and the great classical poet Graviil Derzhavin (1743–1816). The Symposium aimed to popularize Russian literature and the Russian language among a mostly Francophone aristocracy in the hopes of strengthening the national culture without relying on foreign cultural imports. Effusive and sympathetic to religion, the Lovers and their Slavophile descendants disdained politics as secondary and deemed efforts to impose large-scale institutional reform like that proposed by Mikhail Speransky (1772–1839), the tsar's favourite minister, superficial.⁷ They had a manifesto in Shishkov's *An Inquiry into the Old and New Styles of the Russian Language* (1803), a book arguing that the movement led by the belletrist and later historian Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826) was destroying the Russian language by Frenchifying it and abandoning Church Slavonic. Maistre was probably attracted to these people not only because their hostility to imitation could immunize Russia against the radical Enlightenment, but also because they were politically represented by the Tarists, landed nobles who supported gradual reform and the minimization of the autocracy with the aim of improving the serfs' lot without inviting a revolution.

Unlike the Lovers, however, Maistre advocated Russia's Westernization or, more accurately, its Latinization through Catholicism. His defence of this opinion in *Du pape* (1819) would inspire the *Philosophical Letters* (1836) of Peter Chaadaev (1794–1856), whose forlorn depiction of Russia as a lost land belonging to neither West nor East was, in the famous words of Alexander Herzen (1812–1870), the "pistol shot in the dead of night"⁸ that decisively opposed the rationalist, secular, and progressivist Westernizers to the mystical, effusive, and often obscurantist Slavophiles.⁹

⁷ Andrzej Walicki, *A History of Russian Thought: From the Enlightenment to Marxism*, trans. Hilda Andrews-Rusiecka (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979), 96.

⁸ Peter Chaadaev, "Letters on the Philosophy of History," in *Russian Intellectual History: An Anthology*, ed. Marc Raeff (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1968), 159.

⁹ On Tarists and Slavophiles during the reign of Alexander I, see Alexander Martin, *Romantics, Reformers and Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997). On the Westernizers, see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, "Notes on the Emergence and Nature of

Uvarov too shared the Tarists' dislike of politics and sympathized with their ideal of promoting Russian literature and culture. When he was studying in Göttingen in 1802, he attended the Russian history course given by August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735–1809), the historian who laid the foundations for a critical historiography of Russia. This experience helped to spark Uvarov's Russian patriotism before such courses were available in Russia itself.¹⁰ His interest in Russia's original cultural development grew further during his time as an *attaché* of the Russian embassy in Vienna in 1806. There, he formed a close friendship with Germaine de Staël (1766–1817)—whom Maistre had also met and conversed with when he visited Coppet in the 1790s.¹¹ It was under her influence that Uvarov ceased to idolize the French *ancien régime* as his tutor the abbé Mauguin had taught him to do.

But these tendencies coexisted tensely in Uvarov's mind with Westernist convictions that intensified during 1815–18, the flowering years of the Arzamas literary group that he co-founded with a group of Karamzists. Like the Jacobin secret unions that were started after 1812 by disappointed veterans of the Napoleonic wars,¹² the Armazas group advocated Westernization and presented themselves as the light-hearted enemies of the Lovers. Including such luminaries as the Greek patriotic leader Ioannis Capodistrias (1776–1831), the poets Konstantin Batyushkov (1787–1855), Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837) and Vasily Zhukovsky (1783–1852) as well as Karamzin himself, the Armazas 'brothers' banded together to produce witty compositions mocking the Lovers. Some who later became Decembrists joined them. The Armazas spirit evoked generosity, a reformist spirit, a catholic taste, and a dedication to Russia's development coupled with a fraternal feeling for other European cultures.¹³ It also incarnated Uvarov's belief in Russia's partial identity as an Occidental land—a belief that he finally consecrated in 1808, when he became president of the Academy of Sciences and nominated Karamzin and Speransky for election to that body.¹⁴

the Russian Intelligentsia," in *Art and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Russia*, ed. Theofanis George Stavrou (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1983), 3–26.

¹⁰ Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education: An Intellectual Biography of Count Sergei Uvarov, 1786–1855* (DeKalb, IL: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984), 13.

¹¹ Maistre to the marquise de Priero, August 1805, OC, IX, 444.

¹² *Imperial Russia: A Sourcebook, 1700–1917*, ed. Basil Dmytryshyn (New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston, [c. 1967]), 178.

¹³ Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education*, 33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

Writing to Maistre about the history of knowledge may have helped Uvarov to decide where, precisely, he wished Russia to stand between East and West. It is perhaps telling that he co-founded the Armazas group in 1815, the year after he ceased corresponding with Maistre. For although the two men agreed that Russia should be Westernized, they adopted disparate positions on the subject that evolved during their correspondence, and derived from their common views of knowledge.

Maistre and Uvarov's Meeting: Common Work on Education and Erudition

A favourite of aristocratic salons, where he entertained by conversing with an enraptured audience, Maistre enjoyed an unequalled reputation in the Russia of Alexander I (reigned 1801–25) for his erudition and rhetorical skills.¹⁵ Aleksandr Sturdza (1791–1854) reminisced:

M. de Maistre was without question the most memorable character of the place and time in which we were living, I mean the court of Emperor Alexander and the period between 1807 and 1820 [...] We were all ears when, sitting on a sofa, with his head high, [...] the count abandoned himself to the limpid flow of his eloquence, laughed with a good heart, argued gracefully, and animated the conversation by governing it.¹⁶

Maistre's manuscripts, which accumulated in his portfolio for years, also made the rounds. As a royalist critical of publication, he wrote often for a restricted audience of family, friends, and acquaintances. Thus although his most explicit writings on education—the *Cinq lettres sur l'éducation publique en Russie* (composed 1810), the *Mémoire sur la liberté de l'enseignement public* (composed 1811) and the *Observations sur le Prospectus disciplinarum* (composed 1810)—were read with political consequence by the tsar and his ministers, they were never published during Maistre's lifetime. The same is true of the work that

¹⁵ On Maistre's stay and influence in Russia, see M. Stepanov (alias of Andrei Shebunin), "Joseph de Maistre v Rossii," *Literaturnoye nasledstvo*, 30 (1937): 577–726; Vera Miltchyna, "Joseph de Maistre's Works in Russia: A Look at their Reception," in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 241–70 and Mariia Degtiareva and Elizabeth Zelensky, "Joseph de Maistre between Russia and the West," *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 5, 2 (2004): 349–66.

¹⁶ See also Richard A. Lebrun, *Joseph de Maistre*, 183 and n. 31 and Robert Triomphe, *Joseph de Maistre: Étude sur la vie et sur la doctrine d'un matérialiste mystique* (Geneva: Droz, 1968), 305.

laid the theoretical foundations for these pieces, and that Maistre composed in tandem with them. This was the *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, begun in 1809, a treatise that aimed to refute Diderot's *Encyclopédie* by critiquing the epistemology of its tutelary divinity, Francis Bacon (1561–1626).¹⁷ Although the *Examen* remained unpublished until 1836, its ideas probably circulated both orally and in manuscript form through St. Petersburg's salons.

St. Petersburg in the 1810s was an apt place and time to be writing about knowledge. Since his coronation, Alexander had been trying to establish a national system of education. Maistre's educational works and the Maistre-Uvarov correspondence suggest that two camps had formed slowly, and a battle begun to rage between the conservative defenders of a classical curriculum centred on literature—loosely associated with the Lovers—and the progressive advocates of an encyclopedic curriculum favouring the sciences—represented by Speransky and the renegade Hungarian monk Ignatius Fessler (1756–1839). The latter camp grew daily more powerful thanks to Speransky's influence. But Maistre, who associated the sciences and encyclopedic endeavours with the *Encyclopédie* and the French Revolution, supported the *littérateurs*. During 1810, he collaborated with Count Alexey Razumovsky, the minister of education, to create a classical curriculum for the new lycée that Alexander had established at Tsarskoye Selo, and that soon became a model for the other lycées in the country.¹⁸

The circumstances of Maistre and Uvarov's meeting are unknown. It is probable, however, that they were introduced by Razumovsky, who was soon to become Uvarov's father-in-law, and who had just appointed the ambitious young man curator of the St. Petersburg school district. The correspondence focused from the beginning on the nature, history, and uses of knowledge. With his second letter to Maistre, Uvarov enclosed his *Projet d'une académie asiatique* (1810), a recently composed, and much admired, essay arguing for the establishment of an Asian Academy in St. Petersburg that would cultivate Orientalism in order to regenerate post-revolutionary Europe. Maistre responded very favourably to the text, in part because he was keenly interested in the Orient. He had taken private lessons in Hebrew and Persian during

¹⁷ See Richard A. Lebrun, Introduction to Maistre, *An Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon*.

¹⁸ Edwards, "Count Joseph Marie de Maistre and Russian Educational Policy," 71.

his stay in Cagliari in 1802¹⁹ and his lifelong sympathy for the Society of Jesus led him to read extensively on the history of China, a subject in which the Jesuits were then the masters. Thus, when responding to the *Projet*, Maistre could recommend multiple Orientalist works, most of them by Jesuits. His letter of 8 December 1810 refers Uvarov to the “*China illustrata* [1667] by Father [Athanasius] Kircher [1602–80], perhaps the most knowledgeable man of all time, the history of China by Father [Jean-Baptiste] du Halde [1674–1743],²⁰ to that by Father [Joseph de] Mailla,²¹ to the voyages of [Jean] Chardin [1643–1713],²² but above all to the collection of *Lettres édifiantes [et curieuses, écrites des Missions étrangères, par quelques missionnaires de la Compagnie de Jésus]* (1702–76)²³ whose reputation augments every day.”²⁴ Maistre’s advice was outdated: the *Lettres* had indeed been Europe’s major source of information on India, but only until the Asiatick Society of Calcutta began publishing in the 1780s. However—and possibly thanks to Uvarov—Maistre also read the Society’s publications.²⁵ He wrote to Uvarov about “Oriental Jones,”²⁶ whom he sometimes deemed “a bit drunk with Oriental vapours,”²⁷ but to whom he referred repeatedly and admiringly in *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg* (1821). Maistre also had specialist knowledge of eighteenth-century Indic studies. His notebooks

¹⁹ Maistre had studied Hebrew and Persian in 1802 during his stay in Cagliari. See *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J14, 151–65.

²⁰ A reference to the eighteenth century’s foremost Sinological work, the *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l’empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise, enrichie des cartes générales et particulières de ces pays, de la carte générale et des cartes particulières du Thibet, & de la Corée; & ornée d’un grand nombre de figures & de vignettes gravées en taille-douce*, 4 vols. (La Haye: H. Scheurleer, 1736).

²¹ Maistre refers here to Mailla’s *Lettre sur les caractères chinois* (1725).

²² See the recent facsimile edition of Chardin’s *Voyages du chevalier Chardin, en Perse, et autres lieux de l’Orient: Nouvelle édition, conférée sur les trois éditions originales et augmentée par L. Langlès*, 10 vols. (Adamant Media Corporation, 2001–6).

²³ These *Lettres* were successively edited by Fathers Charles Le Gobien (1653–1708), Jean-Baptiste Du Halde, Louis Patouillet (1699–1779), and Nicolas Maréchal (1746–18..?). For their role in the Oriental renaissance, see Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, 28–9, 33, 147–8.

²⁴ Maistre to Uvarov, 26 November/8 December 1810, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, Moscow State Historical Museum, f. 63.

²⁵ In a letter of 21 March (2 April) 1811, Maistre thanks the young curator for having lent him one of Sir William Jones’s volumes and indicates that he has now returned it to him.

²⁶ On Sir William Jones (1746–94), see the biography by Garland Cannon, *The Life and Mind of Oriental Jones: Sir William Jones, the Father of Modern Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²⁷ Maistre to Uvarov, 26 November/26 November/8 December 1810, f. 67 (11)n.

contain extracts from Anquetil Duperron's famous translation of the *Upanishads*,²⁸ and his letters to Uvarov show that he was well aware of the rows surrounding Anquetil's scholarship.²⁹

A shared interest in classical scholarship also drew Maistre and Uvarov together. The second work that Uvarov sent Maistre was the *Essai sur les mystères d'Eleusis* (1812), a study arguing that the Eleusinian mysteries derived from Oriental traditions (a thesis still upheld by scholars). Maistre received this piece enthusiastically, and reciprocated by sending Uvarov a manuscript of his own. Although not mentioned by name, the manuscript was probably *Sur le protestantisme dans ses rapports avec la souveraineté*, a work that Maistre had penned in 1798, but that saw the light only with the publication of his *Oeuvres complètes* in 1884–7. Uvarov read it and offered comments, and must also have been familiar with other Maistrian texts. His view of political history and the French Revolution as providentially guided reverberate Maistre's *Considérations sur la France* (1797); while his praise of constitutions as the unwritten achievements of nations over time³⁰ testifies that he knew the argument of Maistre's *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques et des autres institutions humaines* (1814).

The Maistrian Works Uvarov Knew

The *Observations sur le Prospectus disciplinarum*, one of Maistre's educational opuscles, critiqued the encyclopedic curriculum that the former monk Ignatius Fessler had proposed for the Nevsky seminary at St. Petersburg in his *Prospectus disciplinarum*. Fessler, Maistre objected, intended to clutter students' brains with an "immense mass of indigestible knowledge"³¹ that would prevent them from "[learning] how to learn"³² as Aristotle recommended, and breed in them the scientific spirit of the radical Enlightenment and the *Encyclopédie*. To combat this spirit, Maistre redacted the *Cinq lettres sur l'éducation publique en Russie*, which summoned Rousseau's defamation of science to the

²⁸ Richard A. Lebrun, "Les lectures de Joseph de Maistre d'après ses registres inédits," *Revue des études maistriennes*, 9 (1985): 151.

²⁹ Maistre to Uvarov, 26 November/8 December 1810, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 68 (13).

³⁰ Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education*, 50–1.

³¹ Maistre, "Observations sur le *Prospectus disciplinarum*," OC, VIII, 182.

³² Ibid., 181.

attack of Speransky's variety of education: "Russia gives too much value to science. Rousseau has maintained, in a famous work, that it has done much evil to the world."³³ Worse, science has created revolutionary personalities:

Science makes man lazy, unskilled in business and great enterprises, a quarreller, stubborn in his own opinions and despising other people's, a critical observer of the government, an innovator by essence, contemptuous of authority and national dogmas, etc., etc.³⁴

By "science," Maistre meant both the natural and experimental sciences,³⁵ and specialist knowledge of any kind—even humanistic erudition.³⁶ The former propagated pride by lending to man God's attributes; while the intellectualism of the latter smacked not only of arrogance, but also of pedantry, small-mindedness, and everything contrary to the aristocratic ethic of being agreeable to others that Maistre mastered in the salons.

Not that Maistre recommended "science" to be abandoned. As he saw it, science's moral and social shortcomings derived not from itself, but from the fact that it was taught by itself. In fact, when scientific study followed that of the humanities and religion, "science" proved morally and socially constructive. To make these points, Maistre invoked the authority of the thinker that he had criticised more than any other:

Bacon, a genius wise and deep in a manner quite different from Rousseau has said that *religion is a spice needed to prevent science from becoming corrupted*.³⁷ Indeed, morality is necessary to arrest the dangerous and very dangerous action of science, if one lets it proceed on its own.

This is where the last century was cruelly mistaken. It believed that education was scientific education, even though it is only a part, without comparison the least interesting, and a part that has value only insofar as it rests on moral education. All minds have been turned toward science, and morality has been turned into a kind of *hors d'oeuvre*, a filler of pure

³³ Maistre, "Cinq lettres sur l'éducation publique en Russie," 164.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

³⁵ This is the meaning that Maistre ascribes to the word when describing, for instance, "astronomy, chemistry, and almost all sciences" as the "distractions of a good man." See the "Examen de la philosophie de Bacon," OC, VI, 451–2.

³⁶ Maistre uses the word in this sense when describing "machines" or "instruments" like calculus and the cogwheel as aids to the development of "science." See the "Examen de la philosophie de Bacon," 6.

³⁷ Richard A. Lebrun has searched for this quote through Bacon's works without being able to find it.

convenience. This system, adopted after the destruction of the Jesuits, produced in less than thirty years the dreadful generation that overturned altars and cut the throat of the king of France.³⁸

Correcting the radical Enlightenment and reversing the French Revolution, in short, meant refraining from teaching an infinity of subjects that students could never master, and developing mind, reason, and character by reflecting and writing on great literature. Students could afterwards delve into any sciences they pleased. Consistently with the curriculum of Tsarskoye Selo, the *Cinq lettres* made of physics, the mother of all the sciences, the subject of the seventh, last, and optional year of education.³⁹

By attacking science and the encyclopedic curriculum, Maistre was combating Speransky's homogenizing, egalitarian reforms. And by defending the reading of selected works of literature great and small, he was trying to break Speransky's dream of creating standardized minds beholden to the state, to uphold the formation of free and unique minds *independent* of the state. But Maistre had an additional, more urgent motivation for supporting private instruction: the Jesuits' request to create an autonomous academy at Polotsk. A lifelong supporter of the Society of Jesus, Maistre lobbied for their project by arguing, in the *Mémoire sur la liberté de l'enseignement public* (composed 1811), that "All exclusive privilege in the State is nothing but the permission to do evil."⁴⁰ The tsar was greatly pleased with the *Mémoire* and asked Maistre to discuss Russia's domestic situation further, which Maistre dutifully did in his *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*. Pleased once more, Alexander signed the *ukaz* of March 1812 granting the Jesuits their autonomous academy.

But Maistre's success was brief: Jesuit independence was shattered shortly after by the *ukazes* of 1815 and 1820 expelling the order from St. Petersburg and Russia, respectively. The *Mémoire's* call for pedagogical freedom was never again heeded, and Russia witnessed a steady increase in governmental control of universities and gymnasia throughout the nineteenth century. Thanks to Uvarov's position at the helm of the educational system, however, this control, though lending the sciences importance, was not accompanied by the reign that Speransky had originally reserved for them.

³⁸ Maistre, "Cinq lettres sur l'éducation publique en Russie," 165.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 178.

⁴⁰ Maistre, "Mémoire sur la liberté de l'enseignement public," 267.

Religion motivated *Sur le protestantisme*, the one work that Maistre sent to Uvarov, as it had done the *Mémoire*. Anticipating Dale Van Kley's *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution* (1999) by two centuries, *Sur le protestantisme* evoked the Biblical stories of the stripping of Joseph⁴¹ and Jesus⁴² to argue that Protestantism, Jansenism, and Jacobinism were "brothers" who had "broken up sovereignty to distribute it to the multitude."⁴³ Protestantism, in particular, was a "negation"⁴⁴ that was

as much a civil heresy as a religious heresy. Stronger than the other heresies, it has done what they could never do: all had spread over a terrain more or less extended, but without being able to drive away the universal faith. [...] Protestantism did more: it divided Christianity's empire politically; it created Protestant sovereignties, and in several lands of Europe it reigns alone.⁴⁵

Protestantism differed politically from Catholicism. "Louis XIV trampled Protestantism, and he died in his bed, shining with glory and laden with years. Louis XVI caressed it, and he died on the scaffold."⁴⁶ Nor was Protestantism solely the enemy of kings: "One does not express oneself accurately when one says that Protestantism is, in general, favourable to republics; it is favourable to no government: it attacks them all [...] it is republican in monarchies and anarchist in republics."⁴⁷

Written in Lausanne in 1798, this inflammatory account of Protestantism resonated amply in Russia a decade later, where it served both Orthodox and Catholics to combat the Protestant ascendancy that culminated in 1812 when the Russian Bible Society was established in St. Petersburg and became one of the most powerful institutions in the Empire. In 1810, Maistre complemented the argument of *Sur le protestantisme* in the *Quatre chapitres sur la Russie*. These short texts battled for Catholicism's equality and independence in the tsars' lands by arguing, with the Jesuits, that it was the foreign form of Christianity most loyal to the Russian government. But the argument had no future in Russia. Having allowed the Bible Society to flourish, the tsar ended up by expelling not only the Jesuits, but Maistre as well.

⁴¹ Genesis 37: 22.

⁴² Matthew 27: 28.

⁴³ OC, VIII, 86, 97.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 95.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 68.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 82.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 92.

The Works by Uvarov that Maistre Read

In the meantime, Uvarov was proposing what to Maistre seemed like promising if indirect means of revitalizing Russia. The *Projet d'une académie asiatique*, the first work that the young curator sent to the Savoyard count, formulated a theory of history designed to bolster its author's policy designs. Asia, the *Projet* asserted, was the cradle of European civilization. Greek philosophy and religion both arose from Oriental ideas, which then moved westwards with Rome's conquests, encountering further, previously established Oriental institutions on their way. The Druids, for instance, originated in the East. Later even, the Orient continued to determine the course of European history. The legacy of Muhammad's people indirectly caused the revolutions that cast Europe into its age of anxiety. "Exhausted" and laid to waste by the critical spirit that triumphed during the French Revolution, Europe desperately needed a rejuvenation it could achieve only by returning to its sources in the Orient. Russia, lagging behind Europe in the study of the East, yet geographically adjacent to Oriental lands, was ideally poised to start off this renewal by founding

a mediatory academy between the civilization of Europe and the enlightenment of Asia, where everything relating to the study of the Orient would be brought together. An establishment devoted to the teaching of Oriental languages, where one would see the *European critic* next to the *Asian lama*, would eternalize the good deeds of the monarch and would support his liberal and generous intentions.⁴⁸

Viewing Europe as the homeland of rational criticism, and Asia as that of synthetic intuition, Uvarov lent precedence to synthesis and believed that the Orient was, as Voltaire had first suggested in the *Essai sur les mœurs* (1756), "the true source of all [European] enlightenment." Indeed European science was the distant descendant of the primordial divine revelation that the Orient kept locked up in its sacred scriptures and the world's most ancient tongues. The problem was that, having been severed from the common trunk, Occidental science lay dying, and that only the sap of its Oriental ancestor could bring it back to life.

⁴⁸ Sergei Uvarov, "Projet d'une académie asiatique," in *Etudes de philologie et de critique*, 9.

Hopefully, though, the rebirth of Oriental literature was already having vivifying results, especially in Biblical studies:

Since the Reformation, scholars had occupied themselves [with Biblical studies] exclusively in Germany. This was the prelude to the renaissance of Oriental studies. The writers who, in the eighteenth century, prostituted in France the beautiful name of philosopher, had gathered against Holy Scripture all the sophisms of a futile dialectics; but ever since the Orient has been better known, all wise minds have returned to the Bible the homage due to the character of an inspired wisdom.⁴⁹

Oriental studies also illuminated human history, in which one could see

the traces of a better state, and evidence of the degeneration of the human race. The most ancient doctrines rest on this idea. All traditions are agreed on this point, and this memory, marvelously conserved by innumerable monuments, this memory adopted by sacred legislators, modified by moralists, celebrated by poets, is at the same time a historical testimony that is admirably linked to the divine invention of the word.⁵⁰

God simultaneously endowed humanity with language and revelation:

the first notions transmitted by the Divinity with the word were *simple truths*, adapted to the *simple state* of human society. It is probable, in fact, that the first use of human faculties focused not on proud discoveries, but on relative acquisitions planned in advance. The golden age of the poets is the memory of this better age which, with the help of traditions, was transmitted until the time of the first positive evidence. That age must have been characterized by the knowledge of *primordial notions*, a gift as divine as the word, and enveloped within it.⁵¹

India had received these "*primordial notions*." "It was there that were found the facts most capable of destroying the systems of modern philosophers."⁵² English research, notably that of Sir William Jones,⁵³ made it possible to

oppose to the novels of the philosophers this very simple fact, confirmed by observation, and now generally agreed upon: that as one goes back

⁴⁹ Ibid., 9–10.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 11–12.

⁵¹ Ibid., 12.

⁵² Ibid., 12.

⁵³ In *The Sanscrit Language* (1786), Sir William Jones had published his sensational discovery that Indian and European languages had sprung from the common linguistic source now known as Proto-Indo-European.

further to the origin of the most ancient languages, they become classified in clear and methodical systems, and present a grammatical system as perfect as it is possible for man to attain. It is difficult to dispute the right of anteriority that Sanskrit has until now; and unanimous opinion accords to that beautiful language a simplicity and regularity of form, united to a richness of expression that put it above all our classical dialects.⁵⁴

By implication, Indian civilisation was the most perfect that had existed, since “[t]he more a language is perfect, the more the nation that speaks it approaches civilization.” Claiming that “[s]tudying the language of a people, is to study at the same time the series of its ideas,”⁵⁵ Uvarov dreamt of finding humanity’s first, pure, antediluvian culture. It was a dream common since the late eighteenth century, even among non-Christian authors. Jean-Sylvain Bailly, for instance, had argued, in his then-influential *Histoire de l’astronomie ancienne* (1775), that the astronomical data ancient cultures possessed pointed to a common source, an Atlantis that had been in Kamchatka. Charles Dupuis (1742–1809), for his part, maintained in his scandalous *Origine de tous les cultes, ou la religion universelle* (1795), that the world’s religions all derive from a primordial sun cult.⁵⁶

Uvarov’s own quest for Europe’s Indian origins was inspired by the English linguistics that formed the Indic renaissance. His philology was inspired by Sir William Jones’s *The Sanscrit Language* (1786), which disclosed, sensationally, that Indian and European languages had both sprung from the ancient language now known as Proto-Indo-European. Uvarov was likewise influenced by German philosophies of history that lent India a primordial religious role. In *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* (1784), Herder identified Asian traditions as the most faithful records of the earth’s creation and the origins of the human race. And in 1798, the Protestant pastor spread the idea that humanity had spent its divine infancy in India.⁵⁷ Imbibing these ideas, Friedrich Schlegel (1772–1829) invented the Oriental renaissance⁵⁸ and more particularly the notion that God had first revealed his teachings

⁵⁴ Uvarov, “Projet d’une académie asiatique,” 12–13.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁶ See Michael Sonenscher, *Sans-Culottes: An Eighteenth-Century Emblem in the French Revolution* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2009), 252–4.

⁵⁷ Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, 57.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 72.

to India. In *Über die Sprache und Weisheit der Indier* (1808), he showed that Sanskrit texts convey ideas on a transcendent God,⁵⁹ the immortality of the soul and another life tantalizingly reminiscent of Christianity. Akin to Jones, Schlegel also suggested that Sanskrit was the ancestor of Gothic, Greek, Latin, and Persian. This theory is now discredited, but when it was first published it caused a great stir, and contributed to founding Indo-European studies. Importantly, it led to the idea of an “anterior,” “external,” or “primitive” Christianity, was manifested by all peoples through inner feeling since the beginning of time, and defended by scholars from Georg Friedrich Creuzer (1771–1858) to Ferdinand von Eckstein (1790–1861) and Frédéric Ozanam (1813–53).

Uvarov was very influenced by Schlegel. He met him in Vienna through Staël and learned about his work because she admired it. In fact, Staël looked to Schlegel and his brother August (1767–1845) as epitomes of the new Germanic literature that, as she announced in *De l'Allemagne* (1813), would revitalize Europe and supersede all French productions.⁶⁰ Possibly jealous, Uvarov began a serious literary quarrel with Schlegel and acquired an intense distaste for his romanticism.⁶¹ But the linguistics of *Über die Sprache* made a lasting impression on him, and Schlegel's variety of Catholicism prepared him to converse with Maistre the defender of popes. As Heine remarked with characteristic sarcasm regarding *Über die Sprache*: “The only thing I find fault with the book is its ulterior motive. It is written in the interests of ultramontaniam... in the *Ramayana* the struggle between the king Vishvamisra and the priest Vashishta involves all the same stakes which set emperor against pope: here in Europe the object of the dispute was called investiture; in India it was the cow Sabala.”⁶²

Like *Über die Sprache*, Uvarov's *Projet* argues that Indian literature “draws nearer to fundamental notions, and preserves still some tinges of the primitive organisation of the universe.”⁶³ But India's primacy

⁵⁹ Ibid., 164.

⁶⁰ On the Schlegel-Maistre connection, see, in this volume, Adrian Daub's essay, “‘All Evil is the Cancellation of Unity’: Joseph de Maistre and Late German Romanticism.”

⁶¹ Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education*, 17.

⁶² Heine quoted in Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, 75.

⁶³ Uvarov, “Projet d'une académie asiatique,” 28.

does not mean that the Judaeo-Christian tradition had lagged behind, or that Hebrew Scripture has not attracted brilliant interpreters:

The writings of Moses, the Book of Job, the prophets' canticles, are monuments worthy of rivaling the most perfect productions of antiquity. [...] Of all those who have written on Hebrew poetry, none have better grasped its spirit and rendered its effects than the famous HERDER. An animated style, a prodigious sagaciousness, and the so rare union of a creative imagination and a profound erudition, such were the advantages that he brought to the study of the Orient and principally to Hebrew literature. It is in his work *Geist der hebräischen Poësie* [1782–3], that one can appreciate his importance and his merit.⁶⁴

On his return to St. Petersburg from Vienna, Uvarov also sought out the very same Fessler whom Maistre dismissed as “an angel or a charlatan.”^{65,66} He considered that Fessler, “in his vast erudition, [possessed] a perfect knowledge of Hebrew literature.”⁶⁷ His *Hebrew Anthology* and *Institutiones linguarum orientalium* (1787) were especially commendable.⁶⁸

Having suggested that India was the fount of European religion and all civilization, Uvarov set out to prove it in his *Essai sur les mystères d'Eleusis*. This text illustrated the *Projet's* ideas by studying the rites that Uvarov believed to be the only recorded link to “the primitive source of religious ideas.”⁶⁹ Unlike the Bacchanalia, those conveyors of “frenzied savage forces,” the Eleusinian mysteries were mirrors of God's order, containers of the primitive revelation, and representatives of a “policed civilization.”⁷⁰ They were not native to Greece. There is “no trace of mystical ideas or of mysteries in Homer.”⁷¹ Since highest antiquity, Egypt had enjoyed a monopoly over Oriental ideas, and Greece, the first European country to be colonized by Asians, was Egypt's heir. This was why the mysteries of the Cabeiri, a group of Phrygian gods

⁶⁴ Ibid., 35–6.

⁶⁵ Maistre, OC, VIII, 238.

⁶⁶ Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education*, 21.

⁶⁷ Uvarov, “Projet d'une académie asiatique,” 36.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 37.

⁶⁹ Uvarov, “Essai sur les mystères d'Eleusis,” in *Etudes de philologie et de critique*, 83.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 83–4.

⁷¹ Ibid., 86.

adored in Samothrace, bore a great resemblance to Egyptian ceremonies.⁷² As for the Eleusinian mysteries themselves, their Indian origin was attested by the fact that, when they were over, all rose and uttered the Brahmin words “*konx om pax*.”⁷³

Consistently with their primordial pedigree, the Eleusinian mysteries preserved the ruins of God’s first teachings:

The dispersion of peoples, the abuse of allegory, the personification of God’s attributes, that of the powers of nature, the confusion of ideas on incorporeal substances, all these principles united, in gradually producing polytheism, could not prevent some debris of primordial truths from being preserved in the Orient; and this debris, by a marvelous direction, scattered abroad, crossed Egypt, and, more or less altered, became, at the centre of the ancient world, the mysterious doctrine of the *Aporrhetes*,⁷⁴ and the object of the great mysteries of Eleusis.⁷⁵

Keepers of humanity’s primordial monotheism, the Eleusinian mysteries taught “that double doctrine which elevated a wall of separation between the philosophers and the people,” and that Christianity destroyed by inaugurating “a great epoch, even in the history of philosophy.”⁷⁶

Overtime, the mysteries—like Schlegel’s primitive revelation, which had also become corrupted—degenerated: “By a fatality attached to human things, even to the most holy, the mysteries were not preserved for long in all their purity. Soon initiation became only a vain ceremony, abstinence was almost openly violated; governments speculated on the piety of initiates.”⁷⁷ Before succumbing, though, the mysteries were briefly reborn in glory. “When polytheism, near its fall, desired still to combat the Christian religion, it awakened, [...] on the one hand, everything that was most imposing in the mysteries; on the other, everything that was most elevated in philosophy,” i.e. the new Platonism.⁷⁸

⁷² Ibid., 88.

⁷³ Ibid., 95.

⁷⁴ Name given to those who practiced the ancient mysteries’ “secret doctrine.” See Guillaume Emmanuel Joseph Guilhem de Clermont-Lodlève, Baron de Sainte-Croix, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire de la religion secrète des anciens peuples, ou Recherches historiques et critiques sur les mystères du paganisme* (Nyon: Jardinot, 1784), 339–70.

⁷⁵ Uvarov, “Essai sur les mystères d’Eleusis,” 99.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 101.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 109.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 118.

Placed in the midst of all the treasures accumulated by the Ptolemies, and become [...] the heirs of ancient civilization and the precursors of the new enlightenment, the Platonists formed a dazzling epoch in the annals of the human mind. One must study them in relation to the Oriental ideas with which their writings are full.⁷⁹

Conceiving of Platonism as an “Oriental system of theurgy,” Uvarov exalted it both as a Christian weapon against philosophy, and because it was very popular at the Russian court in the early 1810s. Maistre may have helped to make it fashionable. In 1809, the year before he began writing to Uvarov, he was annotating Origen and Plato. His mystical thought was also deeply streaked with Platonism—especially Cambridge Platonism and Neoplatonism.⁸⁰ As for his defense of the classics, it rested partly on the Platonist assumption that knowledge of the good generates virtuous action. It is probably no accident that the new Platonic craze peaked in 1812 thanks to Maistre’s best friend, Roksandra Sturdza (1786–1844),⁸¹ who imported the theosophy of Franz Xaver von Baader (1765–1841) into Russia after she visited Germany with the imperial court.⁸²

Overall, Maistre approved of Uvarov’s essays. He wrote to Uvarov that he had read the *Essai sur les mystères d’Eleusis* with “extreme pleasure,” and affirmed: “I can only encourage the author, *with gestures and with my voice*, and exhort him not to grow weary. He will never have an approver and an *applauder* more sincere and more affectionate than I.”⁸³ These were palliating words. They softened the disagreements that ran through the Maistre-Uvarov correspondence, and that reveal Uvarov’s lost opinions.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 116.

⁸⁰ On Maistre’s Platonism, see Douglas Hedley, “Enigmatic Images of an Invisible World: Sacrifice, Suffering and Theodicy in Joseph de Maistre,” Philippe Barthelet, “The Cambridge Platonists Mirrored by Joseph de Maistre,” Aimee E. Barbeau, “The Savoyard Philosopher: Deist or Neoplatonist?,” Elcio Verçosa Filho, “The Pedagogical Nature of Maistre’s Thought,” in *Joseph de Maistre and the Legacy of the Enlightenment*, ed. Carolina Armenteros and Richard A. Lebrun, *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 2011: 1.

⁸¹ On Maistre and Sturdza’s epistolary relationship, see A. Markovits, “Joseph de Maistre i Sainte-Beuve v pismach k R. Sturdze-Edling,” *Literaturnoye nasledstvo*, 33 (1939): 379–456.

⁸² On the relationship between Maistre’s and Baader’s thought, see, in this volume, Adrian Daub’s essay, “‘All Evil is the Cancellation of Unity’: Joseph de Maistre and Late German Romanticism.”

⁸³ Maistre to Uvarov, 2 April/21 March 1811, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 76.

A First Disagreement: Over Herder and German Critics

Maistre's second letter to Uvarov of 14 December 1810 reads like a fierce confession of literary anti-faith. Professing "*Mysogermanism*,"⁸⁴ the Savoyard denounces "everything that Germany has produced in the eighteenth century"⁸⁵ and goes so far as to assert, in a typical fit of bibliophobia,⁸⁶ that "if it depended on [him]" to "burn all that Germany had produced in the eighteenth century," he would "not hesitate to imitate *Omar*."^{87,88} There follows a diatribe against Herder, the object of Uvarov's eulogy in the *Projet. The Review of Reviews*, Maistre believes, is right to denounce Herder's "detestable Germanic style," and to state that "*Herder's system as far as it is intelligible is nothing else than the ancient Pantheism*."⁸⁹ To Maistre, Herder's *Gott. Einige Gespräche* (1787), is a text doubly abominable for being impious and sympathetic to Spinoza. Well aware of Spinoza's radical posterity in eighteenth-century France,⁹⁰ Maistre blames him for having been a "true Pantheist" who hid his real beliefs beneath a deism so incomprehensible that thinkers like Bayle, Jacquelot,⁹¹ and Lamy⁹² ended up "fighting against windmills like Don Quixote" in their attempt to understand him; while Voltaire, otherwise so contrary in his opinions to these scholars, was

⁸⁴ Maistre to Uvarov, 14 December 1810, *Ibid.*, f. 69.

⁸⁵ On Maistre's relationship to Germany, see Robert Triomphe's chapter, "Joseph de Maistre et l'Allemagne," in *Joseph de Maistre*, 489–586.

⁸⁶ The hatred that Maistre professed for books and the written word in general flagrantly contradicts his avid reading, voluminous writing, and status as Savoy's greatest book collector. Benjamin Thurston explores the intellectual sources of this paradox in "Joseph de Maistre: The Paradox of the Writer," in *The New enfant du siècle: Joseph de Maistre as a Writer*, ed. Carolina Armenteros and Richard Lebrun, Launch issue of *St Andrews Studies in French History and Culture* (2010). See also Thurston, "Joseph de Maistre: critique de l'écriture comme signe de décadence et de corruption," *Revue des études maistriennes*, 14 (2004), 233–42.

⁸⁷ Maistre to Uvarov, 14 December 1810, f. 69. Maistre is referring to the myth then current that the Library of Alexandria was burned down on the orders of the Rashidun Caliph Umar the Great.

⁸⁸ Germany was far more generous with Maistre than Maistre was with Germany. See Part III of this volume for essays on his intellectual descent in that country.

⁸⁹ Maistre to Uvarov, 14 December 1810, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 70 (3).

⁹⁰ See Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

⁹¹ This may be Abraham Jacquelot, the author of a *Disputatio prima de monarchia totius Ecclesiae quae statuitur in Petro constituta* (1628). The subject of ecclesiastical monarchy became the central theme of *Du pape* (1819).

⁹² A reference to the Maurist apologist François Lamy (1636–1711).

similarly skeptical and paraphrased Spinoza as telling God: "I do believe, between us, that you do not exist."⁹³

This startling attack had apparently been invited by Uvarov's first letter to Maistre, dated 27 September 1810, which cited various German authors and challenged the Savoyard to cite a single line of Herder that was contrary to Christianity. Rising to the challenge with raging enthusiasm, Maistre cited Herder in abundance. He could not, he wrote, "restrain his indignation" when reading in Herder that the honour of "Leibniz and other geniuses of the first order [...] paled before [Spinoza's]." And he averred that "much patience is needed" when being told further that "Spinozism is only in reality a development of these words of St Paul; *in ipso vivimus, movemur et sumus*."⁹⁴ In fact, Herder sympathized with Spinoza to the point that he "says that he proceeds from Spinoza." To Maistre, well aware of the radical Enlightenment's appropriation of Spinoza,⁹⁵ no further proofs were needed of Herder's lack of Christianity. But he nevertheless provided them. Herder wrote "[t]hat he [could not] conceive how one can conceive of the idea of generalising a religion in a world that is round and that does not cease to turn."⁹⁶ "A prodigy of taste and piety!" exclaimed Maistre sarcastically.⁹⁷ Even worse, when hoping to live long enough to finish his dialogue on Spinoza, Herder invoked not God's grace or his own free will, but the "laws of nature" and the "intrinsic necessity" on which they rest.

Maistre's battle, however, was not only with Herder. It was with all of modern German literature:

No one [...] venerates more than I the Germans as scholars. I admire their exactness, their patience, their depth; but I regret deeply that so many good qualities are spoiled by irreligious Pyrrhonism, by false enthusiasm, by the spirit of paradox, and by a frenzied penchant for the bizarre.⁹⁸

⁹³ Maistre to Uvarov, 14 December 1810, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 70 (3).

⁹⁴ *In Him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17: 28).

⁹⁵ On the antagonism between Spinozism and the theological Enlightenment in France, see Jeffrey Burson, *The Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment*, esp. 8, 56–70.

⁹⁶ Maistre to Uvarov, 14 December 1810, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 71 (5). For a full discussion of Maistre's views of Herder in this letter, see Robert Triomphe, "Joseph de Maistre et Herder," *Revue de littérature comparée*, 7–9 (1954): 322–9. Triomphe's account, however, is based on a re-translation into French from a Russian version of the letter.

⁹⁷ Maistre to Uvarov, 14 December 1810, f. 71 (5).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, f. 72 (7).

Maistre's determination to de-legitimate German thought was connected to the fact that Germany in the early nineteenth century was Russia's main conduit to Protestantism, the radical Enlightenment, and the new Biblical criticism. Defeating German eighteenth-century thought was therefore an oblique way of critiquing the Kantian Speransky's reforms, and of routing the literal scripturalism of the Bible Society. Among the Germans, Herder seemed particularly dangerous, because he had been persuaded by *De sacra poesia hebraeorum* (1753) of Robert Lowth (1710–87) that God had inspired Scripture only through natural means, so that the same hermeneutics could be applied to the Bible, and to the poems of Homer and Ossian. This is why, when Uvarov wrote that “[t]he works of the German men of letters on the Bible are comparable to those of the [Asiatic] Society of Calcutta,” Maistre retorted angrily that “nothing is more opposed; for the former are what is most imaginably audacious and fatal for religion.”⁹⁹

But Maistre acknowledged humbly that he knew German literature less well than others, and that his targets were chiefly the Biblical critics. He wrote to Uvarov:

I have read the Germans (in German) less than the others, because I have come to them too late and I cannot read them fluently, but I speak only of those that I know and although I have done hard work in this ambit, I do not at all know those that you cite to me, except Eichorn [*sic*] whose reputation is made as one of the *assassins* of Holy Scripture.¹⁰⁰

The “*assassin*” in question was none other than Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1757–1827), the pioneer of German Biblical scholarship. Like his friend Herder, Eichhorn read the Pentateuch not as Moses' work, but as a collection of Oriental literature that had passed through many hands and derived from several documentary sources. It was Eichhorn who claimed to have re-discovered, after Jean Astruc (1684–1766), that Genesis gives two names to God—Elohim and Jehovah—and that these names correspond to two different sections of probably disparate documentary origin. Coining the term “Higher Criticism” to describe his methods, Eichhorn also investigated the authorship, date, and composition of the books of the New Testament, becoming one of the first scholars to explore the synoptic problem. Most scandalous for

⁹⁹ Maistre to Uvarov, 26 November/8 December 1810, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 63.

¹⁰⁰ Maistre to Uvarov, 14 December 1810, f. 72 (7).

the times, however, were his suggestions regarding the Bible's supernatural content. In the *Wolfenbüttel Fragmente* (1774–8), he drew on skepticism, English deism, and German rationalism to argue that the miracles recounted in Scripture simply reflected Jewish myth and ancient superstition. This interpretive naturalism was blasphemy to Maistre, but he still read Eichhorn, believing that the philological and historical evidence that Biblical critics retrieved could serve to support faith with reason.

Like Uvarov, the assiduous scholar in Maistre was spellbound by the similarities between Eastern and Western religious lore, which he annotated conscientiously. In 1810, he recorded the opinion that the Sanskrit alphabet is nothing other than the ancient Pelagian language; that the Hebrews and Hindus communicated in high antiquity;¹⁰¹ that the Afghans were descendants of the Jews and spoke a language similar to that of the ancient Chaldaeans;¹⁰² that the Hindu annals speak of a divine infant born of a virgin;¹⁰³ that the historical mythology of the Greeks could be correlated with the accounts of the Puranas and the Kali-yoga;¹⁰⁴ etc. No mere curiosities, these notes were the harbingers of Maistre's syncretistic conviction—shared with French Jesuits of the early eighteenth century—that, despite the priority of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, truth inheres in all world religions.

Hence Maistre's "hard work" on German scholarship, and simultaneous desire to burn it all. Hence also the fascination and the repulsion that the Chevalier and the Count of *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg* bear to German intellectual productions. Says the former to the latter:

Did I not see you read, last year, a deadly German in-8 on the Apocalypse? I remember that, seeing you full of life and health at the end of that reading, I told you that after such a test one could compare you to a cannon that had borne a double charge.

The Chevalier may mock the German lack of stylistic grace, but the Count, Maistre's literary ego, devours German Protestant theology with a fascination masked by ironic distance. He replies:

And yet I can assure you that the German work, compared to the *Essay on Human Understanding* [1690], is a light pamphlet, a work of pleasure,

¹⁰¹ Maistre, *Archives de Joseph de Maistre et de sa famille*, 2J16 IV, 52.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, 56.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 2J16 IV, 57.

literally; at least one reads in it very interesting things. One learns, for example: that the purple colour which abominable Babylon once purveyed to foreign nations, obviously signifies the red robe of cardinals; that in Rome the ancient statues of false gods are exposed in churches, and a thousand other things of that kind equally useful and entertaining.¹⁰⁵

The principal reason that Maistre continued to read German theological and Biblical works was what he found at once most incomprehensible and most enthralling about Protestant theology—its erudite obsession with the end of days. A note of *Les soirées*—which probably identifies the “deadly German in-8”—observes:

One will not read without interest the following passage from a German book entitled *Die Siegesgeschichte der christlichen Religion in einer gemeinnützigen Erklärung der Offenbarung Joannis*. Nürnberg, 1799 [...] [This] work deserves to be read by all those who will have the patience. Through the floods of a frightening fanaticism, *erat quod tollere velles*.^{106,107}

There follow some citations from this book that draw on literature and history to argue that the fall of Babylon is nigh and the “time of lilies” dawning. Another note refers the reader to *In Pandectas iuris ciuilis et Codicis iustiniani libros commentarii* (1639), whose author, Matthaeus Wesenbeck (1531–86), “excused himself seriously,” to Maistre’s fascination, “for having undertaken a profane work in a time when the end of the world was visibly near.”¹⁰⁸ These intimations of Armageddon affected Maistre deeply. In *Les soirées*, they mingled with the Herderian prophecy of a “third revelation,” an imminent new age, to yield the idea of the succession of eternities within time.

A Second Disagreement: Over Scientific and Philosophical Criticism

Uvarov’s antithesis between Occidental and Oriental knowledge had a more extensive corollary in Maistre’s thought. *Les soirées* opposes the Occidental, European or “Northern” knowledge represented by modern science and Baconian empiricism to the knowledge of antiquity and the Orient. The former is laboriously accumulated and potentially

¹⁰⁵ Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg, ou Entretiens sur le gouvernement temporel de la Providence*, 2 vols. (Geneva: Slatkine, 1993), 2: 316.

¹⁰⁶ “There was much that you would want to take out.” Horace, *Satires* 1.4.11.

¹⁰⁷ Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, 2: 570.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 571.

destructive, while the latter—effortless, intuitive, seeing the all at once—is the divine science of the dawn of time that was lost successively, but that contained the highest truths ever possessed by humanity.¹⁰⁹ The task of the nineteenth century was to use modern science, Bacon's child, as the architect that would reconstruct the primitive revelation, and return the universe to God.

When ill applied and badly developed, however, the “Northern” knowledge of the moderns could be false and dangerous. Maistre warned Uvarov about this in the letter he wrote him on 26 November (8 December) 1810 to thank him for the *Projet d'une académie asiatique*. This work pleased Maistre in everything, from the style to the argument to the subject itself. His letter congratulates Uvarov for having discerned, despite his youth, antiquity's virtues and the eighteenth century's philosophical evils. But it warns him also to shun even the shyest intimations of eighteenth-century epistemology:

Would you, by chance, have adopted an idea of our century, which imagined that this word ‘analysis’ represented something distinct, and a new system that our predecessors did not know? [...] The fact is that the human spirit is what it has always been; that there is no discovery to be made on its powers; that there is no new method, no *novum organum*, etc. God has given us, once and for all, a lever for our use. The one who uses it to tear cabbages out of his garden is doubtless ridiculous; but it is always the same lever, and the one who calls it *novum organum*, because he applies it to new uses, is a charlatan.¹¹⁰

This passage summarizes a major theme of Maistre's *Examen de la philosophie de Bacon*, a critique of the *Novum organum* (1620) of Francis Bacon (1561–1626), and of its ambition to surpass Aristotle's *Organon*¹¹¹ by devising a method of discovery.¹¹² For Maistre, the idea of replacing the mind, ideally devised to apprehend nature, with a method of knowledge-gathering, was fallacious. Knowledge progressed by developing the ideal instrument that God had invented, not by fancying impossible substitutes for it. The argument was inherently political.

¹⁰⁹ For Maistre's lyrical depiction of modern and ancient science, see *Les soirées de Saint-Petersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, ed. Pierre Glaudes (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 493.

¹¹⁰ Maistre to Uvarov, 26 November/8 December 1810, f. 64.

¹¹¹ Literally, “the instrument,” the corpus of Aristotle's writings comprising the *Categories*, *On Interpretation*, the *Prior Analytics*, the *Posterior Analytics*, the *Topics* and the *Sophistical Refutations*.

¹¹² See Richard A. Lebrun, Introduction to Maistre, *An Examination of the Philosophy of Bacon*, ix–xlii.

If no *novum organum*, no new instrument, could replace a mind left to its own devices, then mind had to extract knowledge by communing with other minds either through social interaction, or by reading.

Reading was very important because it formed reason and awoke innate ideas. It also had benign political consequences. It entailed, concretely, privileging literature and the humanities, rendering the sciences independent of Bacon's method and its Encyclopedic progeny, and overcoming Speransky's reforms.

The scientific-critical stream of thought that began with Baconian induction had a philosophical corollary in the critical tradition that ran from Protestantism to philosophism to the French Revolution. Uvarov was also aware of this aspect of Maistre's thought, which provided further occasions of contention between them. In his letter of 17 (29) June 1814, Maistre responds to Uvarov's comments on a "little work" that Maistre had previously sent him, and that was very likely *Sur le protestantisme*. "I will tell you my weaknesses," wrote Maistre. "The Place where I made Plato agree to take Protestantism by the collar is one of those where I was most proud of myself. I see that you have not distinguished it. A matter of tact. On that point there is nothing to say."¹¹³

Both Maistre and Uvarov valued Plato principally as an Oriental philosopher with a mystical bent who had prefigured Christianity, and both associated Protestantism with the spirit of criticism that had torn Europe apart. But for Maistre, Protestantism had little philosophical value, whereas for Uvarov, it had produced a worthy philosophical synthesis. Hence the latter's praise of Herder as a Christian philosopher. Hence also his silence on Maistre's passage about Plato and Protestantism. For while Maistre thought that Plato the pagan was philosophically superior to Protestant critics, Uvarov believed that, as Christians, Protestant thinkers should not bow down to Oriental philosophers, whether great or small, and whether they had been harbingers of Christianity or not. Contrast Maistre's depiction of Protestantism as a necessary but ultimately ephemeral historical phenomenon:

I believe I have seized Protestantism well by the waist, but I have *embraced* it in both senses of the word. I have called it *Generous enemy, dear Enemy*. [...] I have always lived very well among the Protestants; I have excellent friends among them. Often even I have occupied myself with the services that Protestantism may have rendered. I wrote not long

¹¹³ Maistre to Uvarov, 17/29 June 1814, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 78.

ago—it can be excellent as a remedy, although it is worthless as nourishment—nothing is truer. Thousands and thousands of good people owe their life and health to the Sublimated corrosive: it does not follow entirely that one should make a soup with it.¹¹⁴

With time, the “Sublimated corrosive” would dissolve into the “soup” of Catholicism, which would continue Europe’s spiritual feeding. Herein lay the greatest disagreement between Maistre and Uvarov. The Savoyard count found Protestant works interesting chiefly because they stripped tradition of false accretions and provided empirical supplements to Catholicism’s revealed truth, especially on the subject of the end of the world. An Oriental thinker like Plato who dwelt not on the particular but on the sublime, and whose philosophy contained fragments of the primitive revelation, was therefore philosophically superior to the Protestants, and more affinal with Catholicism than they. Uvarov, by contrast, deemed Catholicism to be closer to Protestantism than to Oriental philosophy, and placed Protestantism and Catholicism in the same bag as instances of European criticism. For him, moreover, criticism was not a fleetingly useful destroyer destined to exhaust itself with time. It was the malleable yet essential ingredient of an imminent synthesis.

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It seems that Uvarov never answered Maistre’s letter on Protestantism. This may be because the letter proposed to begin an epistolary exchange on religious matters of the kind that Maistre was already having with the Gallican advisor to Louis XVIII, Pierre Louis Jean Casimir de Blacas (1771–1839).¹¹⁵ “We could entitle this discussion like that of Limborch and d’Orobio, *amica collatio* surrounded by all the forms of good taste and the mutual regards natural to two men of the world who like and esteem each other. I do not doubt that it would be universally liked and even that it would be very useful.”¹¹⁶

Maistre was referring to *De veritate religionis christianae amica collatio cum erudite judaeo* (1687), a collection of six apologetical letters exchanged between the Dutch Remonstrant pastor Philipp van Limborch (1633–1712) and the Sephardic Jewish apologist Balthazar

¹¹⁴ Ibid., ff. 79–80.

¹¹⁵ See *Joseph de Maistre et Blacas: Leur correspondance inédite et l’histoire de leur amitié, 1804–1820*, ed. Ernest Daudet (Paris: Pion, 1908).

¹¹⁶ Maistre to Uvarov, 17/29 June 1814, f. 82.

(Isaac) Orobio de Castro (1617–1687). This work impacted Maistre so powerfully that, once *Du pape* was published, he began writing a piece in Latin with the same title.¹¹⁷ But although Uvarov was renowned for his love of literary quarrels,¹¹⁸ he seems to have either declined to quarrel, or to have quarreled only in speech. This may indicate, firstly, that defending Protestantism philosophically against someone who considered it an ideational nullity may have seemed to him unpleasant or hopeless; or, secondly, that he agreed more with Maistre on Protestantism's disordering tendencies than Maistre himself believed, so that there was nothing to quarrel about in the first place.

Indeed it appears that Uvarov made Maistre's views of Protestantism his own, for he ended up painting the religion with exceedingly Maistrian colours. The Russian church had a "firm structure," Uvarov wrote, but

[i]n Protestantism it is the opposite; their churches do not contain a Protestant dogma, but the central Protestant principle: '*that each judges by his own conscience the tenets of his own beliefs*', and this places the churches in a state of eternal ferment. Vainly would one search for an anchor in the midst of this unending agitation; an anchor would be broken on the first day of sailing. It is impossible not to note that the audacity of intellectualization about matters of faith has led, especially since the beginning of the nineteenth century, to scepticism. *Rationalism*, in the sense of the negation of all that is supernatural, has brought and continues to bring forth detestable phenomena. From this phenomenon is born an entire set of sects.¹¹⁹

Like Maistre, Uvarov objected to Protestantism because it brought in its wake intellectualization unbounded by faith. But Uvarov thought better of Protestantism than Maistre because he held intellectualization in higher regard. Maistre was ever at pains to convince him of the inferiority of the philosophical-critical tradition. And eventually, he adopted a personal tone on the matter. Arguing that Port-Royal was intellectually less respectable than Uvarov believed, and considering the eighteenth century to have been the age of criticism *par excellence*, Maistre wrote to the young curator: "When you will have vomited the eighteenth century, you will not doubt this; but this is not easy."¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ See Maistre, "Un écrit inédit de Joseph de Maistre: *Amica Collatio* ou échange d'observations sur le livre françois intitulé: *Du pape*," *Études*, 73 (1897): 5–32.

¹¹⁸ Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education*, 17.

¹¹⁹ Quoted *Ibid.*, 96.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 80.

In fact, averred Maistre, “though you are not *totally* and *explicitly* [Protestant and Jansenist], you are more so than you think you are.”¹²¹ The stinging remark may have wounded Uvarov’s traditionalist sensibilities.

A Third Disagreement: Over the Value of Polemics

Uvarov valued critical reason as a source of philosophy, but not as an instrument of political combat. The opposite was true of his correspondent. This divergence between the two men found expression in a debate on the intellectual merits of Russian Orthodox theology. Responding to Uvarov’s *Projet d’une académie asiatique*, Maistre wrote condescendingly: “You make me smile a little with *your renaissance of Oriental letters*. I would like to see your *Exegetes* grappling with Bellarmine, Cappel,¹²² Erpenius,¹²³ Buxtorf,¹²⁴ Maracci,¹²⁵ Houbigant¹²⁶ etc. etc. We would see a good game.”¹²⁷ Because modern Latin Christendom had had to fight to survive, Maistre implied, it had bred Orientalists superior to those produced by Russian tranquillity. This was the advantage of being European. “[A]udax Japhethhi genus”¹²⁸ was endlessly moved by conflict to ever greater discoveries;¹²⁹ and if revolution was the ultimate price of its way of life, the rewards that a public sphere held for human knowledge—and even, secondarily, divine

¹²¹ Ibid., 81.

¹²² Jacques Cappel (1570–1624), a professor of Hebrew and exegetical scholar.

¹²³ Thomas van Erpe (1584–1624), Dutch Orientalist and author, among multiple other works, of a *Grammatica arabica* (1613) and a *Grammatica chaldaica et syriaca* (1628).

¹²⁴ Johannes Buxtorf (1564–1629), Hebraist and author of *De synagoga judaica* (1603).

¹²⁵ Louis Maracci (1612–1700), an Italian priest who provided an acclaimed translation of the Qur’an into Latin (its third), and who held that Mohammed and Islam had affinities with Luther and Protestantism.

¹²⁶ Charles François Houbigant (1686–1783), French Oratorian Biblical scholar and author of the *Conférences de Metz entre un juif, un protestant et deux docteurs de Sorbonne* (1750).

¹²⁷ Maistre to Uvarov, 26 November/8 December 1810, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 72.

¹²⁸ “The daring race of Japhethh,” Maistre’s epithet to describe the Europeans. See “Lettre critique de l’ouvrage précédent [the *Projet d’une académie asiatique*], adressée à l’auteur par le comte Joseph de Maistre,” 65

¹²⁹ On Maistre’s notion that European mores are characterized by restlessness, see, in this volume, Tonatiuh Useche Sandoval’s essay, “Auguste Comte’s Reading of Maistre’s *Du pape*: Theorizing Spiritual Power.”

knowledge—were unmatched. Hence Maistre's advocacy of Russia's Westernisation.

Uvarov disagreed. Though he quarrelled lively, he disliked politics even more than Maistre, deeming that it "devours everything."¹³⁰ And he staked Russia's regeneration not on the combative skills of its theologians, or on the argumentative powers of its Orientalists, but on its envelopment by Synthesis. Russian Orthodoxy did not need Latin Christendom. Quite the opposite: when it came to knowledge and religion, West depended on East.

The Final Disagreement: Over the Value and Transmission of Revelation

Diverging on the value and uses of criticism implied disagreeing on those of synthesis. In Maistre's eyes, Uvarov placed criticism and synthesis, philosophy and religion, too much on a par. That is, he still compared early Christianity, which was wholly divine, with Neoplatonism, which was only partially divine, far too liberally. Commenting on a passage of the *Essai sur les mystères d'Eleusis*, the Savoyard observed:

Beautiful and fair observation on the new *Physiognomy* of polytheism at that time [late antiquity]. The new Platonists asked of all systems a feature to form that physiognomy. They were very careful not to except Christianity from this forced borrowing. They thus started to *Christianize*, which afterwards made malice first, and then carelessness, say that Christianity *Platonized*. I say nevertheless with all my heart, with the ingenious author, *exoriare aliquis*.^{131,132}

Maistre adhered to the strict separation between sacred and secular history that Giambattista Vico (1668–1774) had theorized in the *Principi di una scienza nuova d'intorno alla commune natura delle nazioni* (1725). Christianity had to precede Platonism dogmatically, and it also had to be causally and ontologically prior to it. The knowledge that God had revealed *in toto* was historically more productive than the rubble of revelation preserved in the East. Pushed forward by prophecy, human history had begun, and continued to be reborn, *en*

¹³⁰ Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education*, 18.

¹³¹ *Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor*. [Rise up from my dead bones, avenger!] Virgil, *Aeneid*, I, 625.

¹³² Maistre to Uvarov, 2 April/21 March 1811, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*.

grandeur. This was why Uvarov could not be right when suggesting that “the small mysteries indubitably preceded the big ones” at Eleusis. “I would infinitely desire,” wrote Maistre, “to see the detailed proof of this proposition that seems to me to contradict the nature of things.”¹³³ In fact, Uvarov’s suggestion that the Occident depended spiritually on the Orient was misguided. Again commenting on the *Essai*, Maistre wrote with quiet irony: “I thank the author for having taught me that St Jerome names *Buddha*. I will look for this text that seems to me to have been cited second-hand.”¹³⁴ Another letter asked: “Will you agree with benevolence, Monsieur, [and take] from my old experience the Counsel never to cite second-hand, especially regarding matters of the highest importance? It was necessary to say where St. Augustine said what you have him say.”¹³⁵ No mere scholarly conscientiousness, Maistre’s insistence that one should always check primary sources oneself was a means of preserving Christian dignity by checking Orientalist fervour.

More importantly, returning to primary sources was a way of disproving the notion, apparently dear to Uvarov, that God’s primordial revelation to humanity had been written down in a document, now lost, that had subsequently served as the common source of all the world’s holy scriptural traditions. To French speakers, this argument recalled the radically materialist interpretation of religion that Dupuis had put forward in his *Origine de tous les cultes*. Among Biblical critics, it had an equivalent in the theory, first proposed by Herbert Marsh (1757–1839),¹³⁶ that the Gospels of Luke and Matthew derive from the collection of Jesus’s sayings now known as “Q” (from the German “Quelle,” or “source”). Explosively, the idea of “Q” intimated that sacred texts are products of the human intellect working in time. The intimation was not lost on Maistre. The letter he wrote in response to the *Essai sur les mystères d’Eleusis* critiqued Uvarov for believing that, just as Indian and European languages shared a common ancestor, the similarities between Indian and Hebrew literature might be explained by the existence of a common, primordial, *written* sacred text that had

¹³³ Maistre, n.d., *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 74.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, f. 76 (24).

¹³⁵ Maistre to Uvarov, 26 November/8 December 1810, *Pisma znamenitich inostrantsev k grafu S.S. Uvarovu 1810–1852*, f. 64.

¹³⁶ In his *Letters to the Anonymous Author of Remarks on Michaelis and his Commentator: Relating Especially to the Dissertation on the Origin and Composition of Our First Three Canonical Gospels* (1802).

propagated religion at the daybreak of history. Quoting Uvarov, Maistre wrote:

This conformity [of Indian and Hebrew literature] far from being pernicious... certifies only that the two had tapped the source of the same fundamental notions. Here we have again [comments Maistre] this dreadful idea of a common source, the last resort of those (supposed) philosophers whom you justly blame [...] and who, not knowing how to escape the new proof that resulted from the discoveries made in Indian books, resorted to I do not know what common source to de-legitimate the primacy of Moses. Volnai [sic, Volney] lost his head and even his forehead to the point of maintaining seriously that our Christ had been imagined on the model of the Krishna of the Hindus, which is priceless.¹³⁷

The primordial written source was sheer, nightmarish fantasy. To dispel it, Maistre carried out a passionate, anti-materialist campaign against books, written constitutions and the written word at large.¹³⁸ The irony was that the campaign was fueled by obsessive reading and meticulous annotation, that it adopted the very methods of the Biblical critics it denounced, scouring Scripture to prove that the Orient's "Q" was but a whim.

Climbing Back to Sinai

Arguments aside, Maistre and Uvarov were engaged in a common project of revelation reconstruction that Uvarov illustrated with a felicitous metaphor. Maistre wrote him in his last letter:

The Question that finishes your excellent letter is highly worthy of your good mind, and has made me tremble like a Rose Bush. How to *climb back on Sinai*? If you told me *How to climb*? I would not know very well what to answer. But to *how to climb back* I answer with a rare depth BY CLIMBING BACK—Every man who has come down can go back up by the same ramp he has travelled over—[...] as long as he is alive—but *if he has thrown himself down*?—one can build a ramp or put up ladders—but *if he has broken his Legs*—Let him be healed.—*But if he has no legs*?—Let him be pulled up by the people above—in a word, one must never despair.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Maistre to Uvarov, 26 November/8 December 1810, f. 66 (10).

¹³⁸ On Maistre's hostility to the written word, see Thurston, "Joseph de Maistre: The Paradox of the Writer."

¹³⁹ Maistre to Uvarov, 17 (29) June 1814, f. 82.

The man who had come down from Sinai resembled Europe in the revolutionary age. He had “*thrown himself down*” from spiritual heights, and in his fall, he had broken his legs. To return to God, this man had to travel over old roads with new means. The problem was that this time, the way up the path of Moses might be daunting. This is where the critical knowledge of science and philosophy could be useful. If the divine voice was no longer calling from the top of Sinai, then crutches and machines might be built to help the advance of those to whom God was no longer speaking. The trick was to use these only on Sinai’s holy ground. Elsewhere, they could serve, like Bacon’s science, to speed down the roads to hell.

On this point, Uvarov agreed with Maistre. Throughout his career, he instituted Bacon and his descendants in the public educational system over which he presided, but he made them wait in line behind the classics. Thus Uvarov installed the sciences firmly in the universities and reintroduced the practice of sending Russian scientists on exchanges abroad. In fact his efforts on behalf of the natural sciences and notably of geology were so vast that the mineral Uvarovite is named after him. But his unwavering priority was what we now call the humanities. In 1811, when he was curator of the St. Petersburg school district, he established the classical model that Maistre and Razumovsky had established at Tsarskoye Selo by eliminating the sciences and the encyclopedic curriculum from the gymnasia he oversaw. Later, in the universities, he expanded and bolstered Latin as a central course offering¹⁴⁰ and insisted on the teaching of Oriental languages, giving preferential treatment to Sanskrit the pure. It was his way of executing the traditionalist philosophy of history, and of heeding Maistre’s warning to build cable cars only on holy mountains.

Conclusion

The Oriental Renaissance exercised its greatest intellectual impact on Christianity’s self-image and presentation: “the history of religions, born late, imparted a change of direction to the history of religion.”¹⁴¹ As a conversation between a Roman Catholic and a Russian Orthodox, the Maistre-Uvarov correspondence shows the implications that the

¹⁴⁰ Whittaker, *The Origins of Modern Russian Education*, 65.

¹⁴¹ Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance*, 453.

history of religion had for religious relations and national development in Russia. Disputing, in particular, over whether the extra-Christian traditions preserved in Oriental texts should be lent intellectual authority or simply be used for support was a way of debating whether Russia should be Western or Eastern, ancient or modern, whether it should allow Catholicism to thrive institutionally, and whether its state should remain absolutist or make more room for politics. Schwab has presented the Russian Oriental Renaissance as a phenomenon whose peacefulness was due to the natural affinity between Russian and Hindu souls.¹⁴² Yet the Maistre-Uvarov correspondence suggests that the Oriental Renaissance stirred passions in Russia as it did in France and Germany. And if it did not become more conflictive in the land of the tsars, this was due to the relative smallness of the Russian public sphere; as well as to the traditionalist attempt, inherited partly from Herder and Schlegel, to synthesize Christian, Oriental and ancient thought in a historical theory of knowledge.

Maistre and Uvarov both believed that, in the beginning, God had given humanity a divine revelation that had since been lost and dispersed. Modern humans had afterwards replaced revelation with a new, critical knowledge all their own that manufactured revolution. The task of post-revolutionary Europe was therefore to reconstruct primitive wisdom by reorganising knowledge. In itself, it was a revolutionary project. Rather than waiting for God to speak—as enlightened ancients and Orientals recommended—one had to *make* him speak by turning human science into divine prophecy. It was the revolutionary side of Counter-revolution.

In Maistre's account, the primitive revelation was the living word of the divine Logos. It was spoken, transmitted orally, and inscribed in institutions, the subject of a continuous communication between God and humanity through the medium of the human heart. Across the centuries, and especially in the eighteenth century, God had fallen silent. But human science could re-establish communication with artificial, critical, material means—with pugnacious writing, Biblical criticism, Protestant arguments. Eventually, these instruments would crumble under the aegis of the divine synthesis they had helped to revive. All that would be left of critical materialism would be the tidbits of the divine it had gathered accidentally on its way, the erudite details

¹⁴² Ibid., 449.

on the end of time and on the purple of cardinals' robes that German critics retrieved during their Scriptural investigations. On the historical timescale, science was only an afterthought, a producer of divine remainders that would help synthesis to vanquish criticism by sharpening its spears of war. But, in the nineteenth century, it was an indispensable afterthought. The French Revolution had taught Maistre that absolute falsehood can conquer minds through persuasive presentation and sheer discursive repetition. It was therefore crucial to give truth an advantage, to aid its public and political survival, by gathering empirical knowledge that could produce varied and engaging discourses. In this respect, and despite his royalism, Maistre the scholar and polemicist always inhabited imaginatively a comparatively democratized world where writers and politicians, not government bureaucrats, made history, and where time tended less to do away with politics, than to infuse it with virtue.

Uvarov's belief in a written, primordial revelation suggests that he believed more strongly than Maistre in the power of humans to make their own history. His philosophy of history assumed that God had spoken to humans once, at the beginning of time, and that humans had afterwards taken over responsibility for preserving and transmitting his Word, in their own medium and by their own efforts. Uvarov's contention that the small mysteries of Eleusis had preceded the great ones likewise suggests that he believed humans could begin new histories by gathering and accumulating knowledge piecemeal—in contrast to Maistre's belief that it was always God who pushed history along in rushes of revelation. A more Promethean attitude also informed Uvarov's more open attitude to the critical knowledge that he associated with European thought. Though socially destructive, Protestantism and the radical Enlightenment were philosophically valuable as well as historically durable, especially when embraced by synthesis. Their contribution, however, was limited to helping synthesis proceed through large-scale institutional reform with little public discussion. This was why Uvarov was relatively uninterested in erudition: in a polity without a public, there was little point in helping arguments to triumph by accumulating memorable facts. Cogently, he spent less time cultivating his scholarly talents, than he did building the national educational system that extended the autocrat's will.

True to his dream of a sweeping synthesis, Uvarov was content to offer high-quality education without worrying about micromanagement. He made little effort to adapt the offerings of his educational

system to Russia's economic and professional needs, assuming that training in synthesis-promoting subjects like Greek, Latin, Oriental, Russian and Christian literature and religion was sufficient to prepare Russia's youth for state service, and for whatever further occupations the country might require. It was a Providentialist position intimately shared with Maistre. Once minds were aligned with God, the social order would arrange itself, of itself and without human design.

The great irony was that this Providentialism, so carefully designed to prevent revolutions, eventually helped to prepare one. For the educational system that Uvarov built up partly on Maistre's recommendations produced the class of unemployed intellectuals trained in theology, literature, and the classics who eventually constituted the disaffected base of the Revolution of 1917. Like revolutionary Marxism, intellectual exchanges between early conservative thinkers prepared Russia's regime change. And in a very real sense, the rise of the Bolsheviks was made possible by a now forgotten theory of the loss of God's revelation at the beginning of time, which preached the means that an exhausted Europe should employ to reconstruct it.

AFTERWORD:
THE RECEPTION OF MAISTRE'S *CONSIDERATIONS*
SUR LA FRANCE

José Miguel Nanni Soares

The purpose of this paper is to offer a panoramic view of the use made of Joseph de Maistre's most famous pamphlet, the *Considérations sur la France*, in the historiography of the French Revolution. More precisely, we intend to gather evidence of the echoes left by the *Considérations* in later interpretations of the French Revolution, beginning with Mme de Staël's *Considérations sur la Révolution française*, published in 1818.

Mme de Staël's pamphlet has been chosen as the starting point for our research because it represents a keystone book for the historiography in general and for liberal historiography in particular, providing the first interpretation in which the French Revolution is seen as a whole, as an historical event at once already closed, having its roots in the past, and at the same time as an event which inaugurates a new epoch in history. However, another reason for choosing Mme de Staël's book is the fact that, although we find no mention of Maistre's name in the work, the title as much as the moment of its publication made obligatory the reference of the Savoyard's book, which was first published on French soil in 1814.¹

As for other important interpretations of the French Revolution produced during the Restoration, the works of Thiers, Mignet, Thierry, and Guizot, we found mention to Maistre and his *Considérations* only in Mignet's *Histoire de la Révolution française* (1824) which reproduced the following passage from the second chapter of the *Considérations*: "But our descendants, who will worry very little about our sufferings and will dance on our graves, will laugh at our present ignorance; they will easily console themselves for the excesses that we have seen and

¹ Nevertheless, according to Jacques Godechot it is possible that Maistre's *Considérations* may have served as inspiration for the title of Mme. de Staël's pamphlet. See Jacques Godechot, Introduction to *Considérations sur la Révolution française* (1818) by Mme de Staël (Paris: Tallandier, 1983), 25.

that will have preserved the integrity of *the most beautiful realm after that of heaven*.”²

On the conservative side, the plot theory—hinted at by Burke in his famous *Reflections* (1790) and further developed by Augustin Barruel in his *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire du jacobinisme* (1797)—prevailed as the most common and clearest response to the liberal interpretation of the French Revolution.³ Read as a conspiracy, the French Revolution appears as a violation of French history, something perpetrated by a few, but well-organized people, against a satisfied nation. This thesis, as Amos Hofman recalled,⁴ allowed the conservatives to deny both their share of guilt and the historical necessity of the Revolution.

This fact, allied with the susceptibilities aroused by the *Considérations*—for it advanced a circumstantial theory for the Terror⁵—was responsible for the relatively scant attention the pamphlet received in the period that in theory should have welcomed it the most: during the Restoration, there were only four editions (1814, 1821, 1828, 1829) of the work.⁶ Nevertheless, it obtained great publicity during the rest of the nineteenth century, with twenty-two editions between 1834 and 1882.

² F. Mignet, *Histoire de la révolution française depuis 1789 jusqu’en 1814* (Paris, 1824), 271. Paradoxically, this kind of appeal to Maistre’s *Considérations*, starting from the liberal Mignet and going through the republican Michelet and the socialist Albert Mathiez, proved to be more suitable to classical historiography in its defense of the French Revolution than to the counter-revolutionary and conservative theories in its condemnations of the phenomenon. See footnote 3 below, whose argument applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the conservative works of the twentieth century. Considering the fact that a satisfactory exposition of this subject deserves an entire article, we limit ourselves here to providing some important historiographical references. Cf. Georges Lefebvre., *Réflexions sur l’histoire* (Paris: Maspero, 1978), 228–9; J. Godechot., “As grandes correntes da historiografia da Revolução Francesa, de 1789 aos nossos dias,” *Revista de História-USP*, 80, 39 (1969): 425–6; Olivier Bétourné & Aglaia Hartig., *Penser l’histoire de la révolution. Deux siècles de passion française* (Paris: La découverte, 1989), 159; Gérard Gengembre, *La contre-révolution ou l’histoire désespérante* (Paris: Imago, 1989), 52; Steven Laurence Kaplan. *Farewell, Revolution. The Historians’ Feud. 1789–1989* (Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 42.

³ See Stanley Mellon, *The Political uses of History: A Study of Historians in the French Restoration* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1958), 59–60; Massimo Boffa, “La Rivoluzione e la Controrivoluzione,” in *L’eredità della rivoluzione francese*, ed. François Furet (Rome-Bari: Laterza, 1989), 92.

⁴ A. Hofman, “Opinion, Illusion, and the Illusion of Opinion: Barruel’s Theory of Conspiracy,” in *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 27, 1 (1993): 33.

⁵ Alice Gérard, *La révolution française. Mythes et interprétations* (Questions d’histoire, Paris: Flammarion, 1970).

⁶ See Alain de Benoist, *Bibliographie générale des droites françaises*, 4 vols. (Paris: Dualpha, 2005), 4.

Under the July monarchy, a period marked by steady economic and industrial growth (which would last until 1846), religious issues were responsible for polarizing political and historical opinion. Not surprisingly, Michelet and Quinet referred to Maistre and his *Considérations* in their works. Protestant (by his mother's side), republican and 'Girondin', Quinet was a scathing critic of Maistre, as we can see in the 13th lesson of his *Le Christianisme et la Révolution française* (1845):

On the subject of violence, the theologian J. de Maistre becomes in thought the clergy's Robespierre. In theory, he opposes a terrorism of the Church to the terrorism of the Convention. His pitiless God, assisted by the executioner, the Christ of a permanent committee of Public Safety, is the ideal of '93, but a '93 eternalized against the Revolution. In the name of the Church, he admits the system of the Mountain, the terror, the scaffold, which requires an altar, 'the earth continually imbibing blood', everything, except the promised liberty, equality, and fraternity. In this theology, which really makes death the order of the day, the absolutism of the Convention is basically what remains, without the hope of liberation before the globe's last day, Robespierre without Rousseau, the means without the end. Catholicism's hatred is then so great against the Revolution, that to kill it in the cradle it borrows its hell, rejecting only its heaven.

As for Michelet, the use he made of the *Considérations*, whose title appeared misquoted in his *Histoire de la Révolution française* (1847), provides further evidence of the eccentricity of this counter-revolutionary pamphlet, which, despite being a radical refutation of the French Revolution, served the republican professor as an endorsement of his critique of the feudal remnants and the aristocracy of the old regime: "This was a class of men very mixed, but generally weak and physically fallen... This is what J. de Maistre recognized in his *Considérations sur la Révolution*."⁷

Later in the book, it is certain that Michelet was referring to the *Considérations* when he said: The émigrés risked being defeated, killing the fatherland, to eternal dishonor. M. de Maistre said to them: "Eh! Unfortunate ones, congratulate yourselves for having been beaten by the Convention!... Would you therefore have wanted a dismembered and destroyed France?"⁸

⁷ J. Michelet, *Histoire de la révolution française*, 2: 3.

⁸ Jules Michelet, *Histoire*, 13: 1. There is one more reference to Maistre in Michelet's *Histoire* which can be found in 4: 1.

As for the most important works of history written in that period,⁹ we were able to trace the presence of Maistre only in Tocqueville's classic *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution* (1856), where there is a reference to the *Considérations*: "Several consider it as the visible action of the devil on earth. *The revolution has a satanic character*, says M. de Maistre since as far back as 1797."¹⁰

The February Revolution brought a new public for Maistre's books: the bourgeoisie. Faced with the red threat to property, the bourgeoisie discovered that social and political order would be preferable to the risk of following the entire revolutionary programme, so it decided to forget old dynastic strife and to form a 'party of order' with the legitimists.

This deflection of public opinion to the right reflected positively on the *Considérations* (of which fourteen editions appeared between 1850-1874), along with editions of other Maistre's works, giving rise to important commentaries by Sainte-Beuve, Barbey d'Aureville,¹¹ Charles de Rémusat,¹² Alphonse Aulard (the homonymous father of the well-known republican of the Third Republic and first keeper of the Sorbonne's chair devoted to the history of the French Revolution), and Alphonse de Lamartine.

Sainte-Beuve, for instance, took the publication of the *Letters* of Joseph de Maistre as an opportunity to suggest the reading of *Considérations*, in which the Revolution was treated

⁹ Lamartine, *Histoire des Girondins* (1847); Louis Blanc, *Histoire de la révolution française* (1847); Quinet, *La révolution* (1865).

¹⁰ Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien régime et la révolution* (1856), 1: 1. However, it is very likely that Tocqueville was aiming at Maistre in the following commentary: "The Revolution was not made, as some have thought, to destroy the empire of religious beliefs; it has been, despite appearances, essentially a social and political revolution; and, in the circle of institutions of this kind, it had only tended to perpetuate the disorder, to render it in some way stable, to *methodize* anarchy, as one of its principle adversaries said, rather than to increase the power and the rights of the public authority." 1:4.

¹¹ Barbey d'Aureville wrote *L'ensorcelée* (1852), and *Le chevalier des Touches* (1864), under heavy Maistrian influence, as he confessed in his *Mémoires*. See Jacques Petit, *Barbey d'Aureville critique* (Paris, 1963). In 1851, d'Aureville published *Les prophètes du passé. J. de Maistre—de Bonald—Chateaubriand—Lamennais*. See also, in this volume, Kevin Erwin's essay, "Le mystique de la tradition: Barbey Worships at the Altar of Joseph de Maistre."

¹² "It was on the genius of modern times that he declares eternal war, against this genius as it manifested itself through the principles of the French Revolution. It is not the excesses, the wild behavior, and the crimes that he attacks; the excesses, the wild behavior, and the crimes are for him the essence of the revolution, and to want to separate it from the evil it did, is to try to separate it from itself." Charles de Rémusat, "Du Traditionalisme," *Revue des deux mondes*, 9 (27th year, 2th period): 243, 15 May 1857.

not only in its imminent causes and in its immediate effects, but in his principles and its sources, in all its scope and in its development, in even its most distant phases, where the future Restoration is predicted and almost described in its ways and means. The impression that this book made at the moment it appeared was lively; but its great explosion took place only twenty years later, when events had verified its most memorable points.¹³

In his *Portraits littéraires*,¹⁴ Sainte-Beuve informed his readers that “religious discussions”¹⁵ had favored the diffusion of Maistre’s books in France and praised the *Considérations* for having judged, “at first sight, and from so high, the French revolution.”¹⁶

Aulard, just like Sainte-Beuve, attributed the great popularity enjoyed by Maistre in the middle of the nineteenth century to the eloquent exaltation of France present in the *Considérations*:

These eloquent lines, which testify to such a high esteem for our country, cannot be read without emotion. They easily make us forget the stylistic violence and the bad logic, and explain in a way the recognition, mixed with resistance, which the Count de Maistre enjoys among us.¹⁷

Lamartine, a few years later, would manifest his opinions on the *Considérations* and its author:

Such is the book, worthless as prophecy, violent as philosophy, disordered as politics... But this book is a lightning bolt from the heights of the Alps illuminating with a new and sinister light all the counter-revolutionary horizon of Europe still in a stupor... That brief, nervous, lucid style, stripped of phrases, robust of limb, did not at all recall the softness of the eighteenth-century, nor the declamations of the latest French books: it was born and steeped in the breath of the Alps; it was virgin, it was young, it was harsh and savage; it had no human respect, it felt its solitude; it improvised depth and form all at once... That man was *new* among the *enfants du siècle*.¹⁸

¹³ Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du lundi* (1851). We accessed the digital version available at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/CadresFenetre?O=NUMM-37439&M=tdm>, 196.

¹⁴ Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits littéraires* (Paris, 1862). We used the digital version which can be found at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k35430t.table>.

¹⁵ Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits littéraires*. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k35430t.table>, 387.

¹⁶ Sainte-Beuve, *Portraits littéraires*. <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/CadresFenetre?O=NUMM-35430&M=tdm>, 420.

¹⁷ Alphonse Aulard, “Joseph de Maistre,” *Revue contemporaine*, 28: 626, 1856.

¹⁸ Alphonse de Lamartine, *Souvenirs et portraits*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1871), 1: 188–9. This quotation was characteristic of French literary appraisals of Maistre during the nineteenth century. See Richard A. Lebrun, Introduction to *The new enfant du siècle: Joseph de Maistre as a Writer*, ed. Carolina Armenteros and Richard A. Lebrun, Launch issue of *St. Andrews Studies in French History and Culture* (2010).

As for one of the most important historiographical works published during the Third Republic, *Les origines de la France contemporaine* (1876–93) by Hippolyte Taine, there are only scanty references to Maistre, and none to the *Considérations*.

Maistre and his pamphlet fared better in Albert Sorel's *L'Europe et la Révolution française* (1885). Sorel avoids Taine's 'parti pris' with regard to popular violence during the Revolution, understanding it as a result of the disastrous policies pursued by French émigrés and European courts. We found several quotations from the *Considérations* and Maistre, who is described as the "most eloquent apologist of the counter-revolution,"¹⁹ in order to illustrate the risks brought about by the counter-revolutionary politics to French national integrity.

However, Maistre's main virtue in the *Considérations* consisted, according to Sorel, in fathoming better than everyone else the historical phenomenon of Jacobinism, to which France, under the pressure from both civil and foreign war, owed its very territorial integrity.²⁰

From the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, Maistre's name would be associated mainly with the Action française.²¹ Despite the fact that several authors have underlined the influence of Maistrian thinking over both Maurras and the Action française in general,²² this assimilation, as recognized Jean Zaganiaris in an excellent study, did not happen so naturally:

It would be illusory to think of relations between Maistrian thought and the Action française by referring to the monarchism of this movement as a given acquired in advance. It was through a critique of what they perceived to be the sad reality of the Third Republic, decedent, unstable, and corrupt, and not by reason of an attraction for monarchy, that this counter-revolutionary organization was constituted.²³

One can testify to this by the fact that the movement never mentioned Maistre's name until 1901, when the Savoyard finally appears in a

¹⁹ Albert Sorel, *L'Europe et la révolution française*. III Partie: *La guerre aux rois* (20th edn., Paris, 1920) 479, 537 and 565.

²⁰ Sorel, *L'Europe*, 530.

²¹ Founded in June 1899 as an extension of the Ligue de la Patrie Française—created in 1898 as a response of conservative and nationalist intellectuals against the Dreyfusards from the Ligue des droits de l'homme (1898).

²² Philippe Burrin, "Le fascisme," in J.F. Sirinelli, *Histoire des droites en France* (Paris: Gallimard, 1992), 1: 623–38; Michel Winock, "L'héritage contre-révolutionnaire," in *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France*, ed. Michel Winock (Paris: Le Seuil, 1993), 17–49.

²³ Jean Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires: Interprétations et usages de la pensée de Joseph de Maistre XIX^e–XX^e siècles* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 113.

collection entitled “Nos maîtres.”²⁴ By selecting some passages illustrating Maistre’s thinking—mainly obtained from his *anti-Rousseauian* treatise *De la souveraineté du peuple*—and displaying them in the way of aphorisms, the Action française was able to attract the Catholic public without hurting the susceptibilities of the movement’s positivist wing—which might be scandalized by Maistre’s masonic past. And this *anti-Rousseauian* treatise fitted well into the movement’s designs: after all, it offered the opportunity to defend the monarchy without appealing too much to Providence, showed the infeasibility of popular sovereignty in a great nation, and last but not least, criticized the ambition of the Third Republic—a ‘vice’ inherited from the French Revolution—to rebuild society through abstract laws.

The following year, more exactly on 1 February 1902, the movement’s magazine (*Revue de l’Action française*) published an article signed by Charles Maurras (1868–1952), in which Maistre was not only judged a modern and ‘positive’ author, but also praised for his attacks on the revolutionaries values crystallized in the Third Republic: “Thus thought Joseph de Maistre. Let us raise a monument to him; but we try especially to understand and spread his method.”²⁵

In 1907, through the publishing initiative of the Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, this conservative-reactionary movement issued a new edition of the *Considérations*—the first since 1882—with a preface written by the priest Bernard de Vesins. Inspired by Maurrassian ideas, the preface-writer praised the Maistrian critique of abstract systems applied to politics, which, according to him, underlay the condemnation of the regime of the Third Republic launched by the movement:²⁶

This is the great thought of all work: never to build future cities according to the plans of our imagination and reasoning, but always to seek in established customs the practical way to live in peace in our present cities. ... Several of these maxims must be engraved in letters of gold on all the walls of this terrible factory of oppressive or destructive laws that is the Chamber of Deputies.²⁷

²⁴ “Nos maîtres: Joseph de Maistre: Aphorismes de politique positive,” in *RAF*, 1 March 1901. Before Maistre, the “maîtres” selected were, respectively, Rivarol, Voltaire (with the curious subtitle “A bas les Juifs!”) and Bonald. Even Machiavelli would be chosen, in the 1 July 1904 edition. See J. Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 130.

²⁵ The article’s title is “Le Monument de Chambéry: Xavier et Joseph de Maistre,” cited in J. Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 134–5.

²⁶ See Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 174.

²⁷ B. Vesins cited in Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 175–6.

Curiously and in accordance with the Action française's political strategies, Vesins concluded his preface by emphasizing the incisive character of the pamphlet instead of its religious message.²⁸ In this respect, Zaganiaris concluded that:

Maistrian thought was mobilized in a register of action that was not only foreign to him but which had rejected the forms of the end of the eighteenth century. According to Joseph de Maistre, the Counter-revolution was not the work of individuals but the action of Providence. For Bernard de Vesins, the decadence of the present period made necessary the action of some men who would re-establish the king and put an end to a regime that gave individuals the illusion of being able to participate in political life.²⁹

The public of the Action française would wait until 1910 to find articles in which Maistre's name again appeared as a centerpiece. This time, it was about the movement's counter-offensive directed to the public of Savoy against the local government that decided to pay tribute to Rousseau at Chambéry, Maistre's homeland, in 1910 (in presence of M. Fallières, president of French Republic).

It was Jules Lemaître (1853–1914), professor of literature and ex-president of the *Ligue de la Patrie Française* during the Dreyfus affair, who assumed the task of extolling Maistre's name in the article "Joseph de Maistre" (*RAF*, 15 November 1910). In order to depict Maistre as a "judge and witness" of the French Revolution, the article selected many passages of the *Considérations*. Curiously, as underlined by Zaganiaris,³⁰ Lemaître tried to conceal the Maistrian providential treatment of Terror—which he knew too well³¹—for by attributing it to Providence,

²⁸ "In these times when reason, irritated by the abuse of discussions, has lost the habit and taste of affirmation, when the truth almost no longer dares to show itself in the procession of errors designed to render it less frightening, reading Joseph de Maistre will be a salutary remedy for many deceived men. It will restore their virility; it will dissipate their hesitations; it will lead them straight to the truth and it will change their timidity of mind and word into burning ardor of vocation." B. Vesins, cited in Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 176.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 141.

³¹ However, in another article, Lemaître, while commenting other aspects of Maistre's interpretation of the Revolution, was more cautious: "However, Joseph de Maistre and Rivarol himself had been extremely severe towards the pre-1789 nobility... Joseph de Maistre going as far as to say in his *Considérations* that 'the French Revolution had had for a principle cause the moral degradation of the nobility.'" Lemaître, "Nouveaux entretiens de M. Jules Lemaître avec un de ses amis," *RAF*, 1 November 1903, cited in Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 142.

as the Savoyard had done, was to betray the Action française's revolutionary activist intentions. His discourse, just like Maurras had done in 1902, emphasized the 'historical method' whereby Maistre in the *Considérations* condemned the French Revolution without appeal: the book, says the professor, was written for the French people of the 20th century, the time of the crumbling Third Republic.

Only in 1921, on occasion of the centenary of his death, did Maistre reappear in the movement's magazine, again through Maurras's pen.³² The purpose of this article, as indicates by the title ("La vérité sur Joseph de Maistre"), was to prevent a possible condemnation of the Savoyard by members of the Action française due to his Masonic past (which was simultaneously abhorred by both Catholic and positivist wings of the movement)—stressing that the lodges Maistre were involved in did not take part in revolutionary activities and concluding that his participation was not only normal to people at the end of the eighteenth century, but also expressed the religious zeal of his 'spiritualist piety'.³³

In 1936, just before the 150th anniversary of the Revolution, a new edition of the *Considérations* came to light, this time with François Vermale and René Johannet writing the preface.³⁴ During the 1940s and on the eve of the instauration of the Vichy regime, Bertrand de Vaulx (1892–1976)³⁵ issued an anthology of Joseph de Maistre's texts,

³² Charles Maurras, "La vérité sur Joseph de Maistre," *AF*, 20 February 1921.

³³ Maurras cited in Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 145.

³⁴ A Catholic and a member of the anti-Semitic wing of the movement, in 1932 Johannet had dedicated an essay on Maistre, entitled *Joseph de Maistre* (Paris: Flammarion, 1932), in the context of the European expansion of fascism (Johannet himself was sympathetic to Mussolini). In this essay, he criticized Maistre's involvement in Masonic activities (roughly speaking, the Action française reproduced at face value the critiques and accusations that abbé Barruel addressed to Freemasonry, including only new 'elements' of this classic 'plot theory', that is, the Jews and the financial interests), which could be tracked mainly in *Les soirées* (1821). However, Johannet concluded that Maistre's participation was brief and without further consequences, showing that Burke and not the mystical currents of Freemasonry was the main source of the Savoyard thought. "We have always hoped to derive from the past all that we possess as a heritage bequeathed by our ancestors. Our constitution is not a fictional contract fabricated by your Rousseau, worthy of being violated every three months, but a real contract, by which King, noble, people, and church each bind the others and believe themselves bound." Thus spoke Burke in 1790. His doctrine will find profound echoes in Maistre." Johannet cited in Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 192.

In this way, Johannet highlighted the up-to-dateness of *Considérations'* religious content for the secular public of the Third Republic. Maistre and his sublime pamphlet were invoked to demonstrate that the French republican regime was condemned to collapse, for in its foundation divine agency was totally absent.

³⁵ Just like Pierre Gaxotte, he had been previously a Charles Maurras' secretary.

selecting many passages from the *Considérations sur la France* in order to join both the positivist and religious contents of the Savoyard's message:

For if Joseph de Maistre, in the study of history, presented an exact analysis of secondary causes, capable of satisfying the most positivist mind, he always attached his secondary causes to a providential design. For example, in the French Revolution, he did not limit himself to stating that the patriotism of the Jacobins and the Committee of Public Safety guaranteed the indivisibility of France and thus preserved the legitimate heritage, which has already a strongly penetrating view; he also saw in this protection the action of Providence. The Jacobins, and Napoleon, had been instruments of Providence.³⁶

However, in the context of the European atmosphere of warfare it was strategic to underline the other aspect of *Considérations*, that is, the Maistrean conception of war as a divine punishment of a humanity plunged into sin:

Maistre presents war as the means to chastise evils and general disorders. And to those who would object that too many innocent persons perish in these battles, Maistre opposes the theory of the reversibility of merits and punishments, according to which the sacrifice of the just profits the guilty. The master idea of his metaphysics is found already in the *Considérations* and was fully developed in the *Soirées*.³⁷

In the postwar period, Maurras, in his *Réflexions sur la Révolution de 1789* (1948), again referred to the *Considérations*, even though he distorted the pamphlet's meaning:³⁸

Therefore it was not the Jacobin revolution that distinguished the French Revolution. I don't know if the French Revolution is satanic as Joseph de Maistre said. It is certainly inevitably anti-French. What about it could have been French? It destroyed all France.³⁹

³⁶ B. de Vaulx, cited in Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 199.

³⁷ B. de Vaulx, cited *Ibid.*, 199–200.

³⁸ The *Réflexions* defined the French Revolution as a process that, imported from outside the country, interrupted the French monarchy—a regime he judged best fitted to French public interest, for it remedied both the individualism and particularism, triumphant after the advent of universal suffrage—abandoning the country to a heterogeneous group composed of “metics,” “Freemasons,” “Protestants,” and “Jews.” By interpreting the French Revolution as a repeatable historical event—in 1830, 1848, 1871 and 1899 (the year in which Dreyfus was declared innocent), Maurras distanced himself from the anti-communist right (even the one which integrated the Action française), for according to him the fight should be directed against the 1789 values incarnated by the post-war Liberation.

³⁹ Charles Maurras, cited in Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 166.

Once we reach the middle of the 20th century, it is possible to ascertain a sharp fall in new editions of the *Considérations*. After 1943, the next edition of the work did not appear on French soil until 1980. Nothing like the earlier century, where, in each political upheaval, Maistre was visited, in heaven or hell, depending on the side assumed.

Despite the fact that the historiography of the Revolution in the decades between 1920 and 1970 had been oriented by the Marxist epistemological model and the hegemony of social history, Maistre's *Considérations* did not in the least go unnoticed. We found mentions in the works of G. Lefebvre,⁴⁰ Federico Chabod,⁴¹ Jean-J. Chevalier,⁴² G. de Bertier de Sauvigny,⁴³ R. R. Palmer,⁴⁴ Roger H. Soltau,⁴⁵ John McManners,⁴⁶ Norman Hampson,⁴⁷ and especially, in the works of Jacques Godechot⁴⁸ and Paul Beik,⁴⁹ both dedicated to interpretations of the counter-revolution. And in order to emphasize his criticism of the émigrés, even the socialist historian Albert Mathiez reproduced the

⁴⁰ Lefebvre referred to Maistre in his works of a general character, such as his *La révolution française* (1930), *La naissance de l'historiographie moderne* (posthumous, 1971), and *Réflexions sur l'histoire* (posthumous, 1978). Although a socialist and great exponent of social history, Lefebvre called the attention of Maistre's detractors to the fact that he possessed the 'sense of history' (*La révolution française*, Paris, 1951, 613) as well as to the fact that a 'spiritualist' like him could not deny moral freedom (*O nascimento da moderna historiografia*, tr. José Pecegueiro (Lisbon: Sá da Costa, 1981), 249).

⁴¹ Known for his studies on the Italian Renaissance and teaching at the University of Rome during the academic year of 1951–2, Federico Chabod mentioned Maistre—and indirectly the *Considérations*—when writing about the French Revolution. See Chabod, *Alle origini della rivoluzione francese*, ed. Fausto Borrelli (Firenze-Antella: Passigli, 1998), 24–5, 213 and 225.

⁴² Jean-Jacques Chevalier, "Un libro muy extraño: Las *Consideraciones sobre Francia* de Joseph de Maistre (1797)," in *Revista de estudios políticos*, 44, 64 (1952): 91–108. This is an excellent résumé of Maistre and his *Considérations*.

⁴³ G. de Bertier de Sauvigny, *La Restauration* (Paris: Flammarion, 1955), 345.

⁴⁴ Palmer mentioned the *Considérations* in *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: A Political History of Europe and America, 1760–1800*, 2 vols. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1959–64).

⁴⁵ Roger Henry Soltau, *French Political Thought in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1959), 16–26.

⁴⁶ John McManners attributed to Maistre (and Chateaubriand) the merit of identifying an aristocratic revolution at the beginning of the French Revolution. See "The Historiography of the French Revolution," *The New Cambridge Modern History* (1965), 8: 621–2.

⁴⁷ Norman Hampson, *The First European Revolution, 1776–1815* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1969), 117.

⁴⁸ Jacques Godechot, *La contre-révolution: Doctrine et action 1789–1804* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1961).

⁴⁹ Paul H. Beik, *The French Revolution Seen From the Right: Social Theories in Motion, 1789–1799* (New York: H. Fertig, 1970).

following quotation from Chapter II of Maistre's *Considérations* in the third volume of his *La révolution française*: "What were the royalists asking for when they called for an imagined counter-revolution, that is to say, one made abruptly and by force? They requested, in fact, the conquest of France; they requested therefore her division, the annihilation of her influence, and the debasement of her king." Curiously, we found no references to Maistre in the important conservative works written in the 1920s: *Les sociétés de pensée et la démocratie: Études d'histoire révolutionnaire* (1921) by Augustin Cochin and *La révolution française* (1928) by Pierre Gaxotte. It was only in the 1974 edition of his book that Gaxotte, assisted by Jean Tulard,⁵¹ mentioned the *Considérations*, but just as a bibliographical reference.

Undoubtedly, Maistre suffered from a handicap for being so narrowly identified with the *Action française* and, by association, with the Vichy regime and Fascism.⁵² Thus Mussolini's admonitions against Maistre's political views mattered very little to the Savoyard's critics: "The fascist negations of socialism, of democracy, and of liberalism must however not make anyone think that fascism intends to bring the world to what it was before 1789. ... We do not turn backwards. Fascist doctrine has not chosen Maistre as prophet. ... A party that governs a nation by *totalitarianism* is a new fact in history."⁵³

⁵¹ Later, Jean Tulard wrote an introduction to the 1980 edition of the *Considérations* issued by Garnier Frères.

⁵² In an essay written in 1960 but published only in 1990, Isaiah Berlin described Maistre as a "prophet of the future," as he anticipated in his works all the evil things that would brand the extreme twentieth century (totalitarianism, genocide, wars, torture, persecution against intellectuals, etc). "De Maistre e as origens do fascismo," in *Limites da utopia. Capítulos da história das idéias* (São Paulo, 1991). Ironically enough, while Mussolini 'condemned' Maistre's critique of democracy for not advocating the modern *totalitarian* state, the liberal Berlin imputed to him those very qualities that Mussolini did not identify in his thought. Also, we can identify the same perspective of analysis in the entry "Maistre" that Massimo Boffa wrote for the *Dictionnaire critique de la révolution française* (ed. Mona Ozouf and François Furet (Paris: Flammarion, 1988)), in which he relates Maistre's defense of royal absolutism and papal infallibility to the political 'decisionism' and the modern defense of dictatorship present in the works of Carl Schmitt. As a full treatment of this matter transcends the purpose of this paper, we limit ourselves to references to authors who have reached a different conclusion when comparing Maistre and Carl Schmitt: Alberto Spektorowski, "Maistre, Donoso Cortés and the Legacy of Catholic Authoritarianism," *Journal of the History of Ideas* (2002): 283–302; Graeme Garrard, "Joseph de Maistre and Carl Schmitt," in *Joseph de Maistre's Life, Thought and Influence*, ed. Richard A. Lebrun (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 220–38. For a contextualist approach of the Schmittian appropriation of the Maistrian thought, see Jean Zaganiaris, *Spectres contre-révolutionnaires*, 209–39.

⁵³ Benito Mussolini, *Le fascismo: Doctrine, institutions* (Paris, 1933), 49.

So perhaps it is not surprising that on the eve of the Revolution's bicentenary, the Italian historian Massimo Boffa, a specialist in counter-revolutionary thought, directed a stern criticism against the Maistrian reading of the Revolution (which would be later mitigated in the entry "Maistre" he wrote for Mona Ozouf and François Furet's 1988 *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*).⁵⁴

Yet it is not true that reflection on the causes of the Revolution is lacking in Maistre's thought, for in works like *Réflexions sur le protestantisme dans ses rapports avec la souveraineté* (1798), *Du Pape* (1819) and *De l'Église Gallicane* (1821), the French Revolution is explained in the light of a long-term process initiated by the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century and developed later into a decisive Jansenist-parliamentary opposition to monarchic absolutism in eighteenth century France. By the way, one can find this argument treated in detail and according to the best methods of historical erudition in Dale K. Van Kley's *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution: From Calvin to the Civil Constitution, 1560–1791* (1996).⁵⁵

Likewise, instead of condemning Maistre for not having paid enough attention to social and economic factors of the French Revolution,⁵⁶ we prefer to be relatively indulgent with him and, without ignoring his flaws, to recognize that he wrote always from his experience in the semi-peripheral areas of the modern world-system: Savoy, Lausanne, and czarist Russia.

Another factor that cannot be ignored by those who indict Maistre for giving too much to Providence in his reading of the Revolution, is the radical change that it brought in relations between Church and

⁵⁴ Massimo Boffa, "Joseph de Maistre: la défense de l'autorité," *Le débat*, 39 (1986): 81. "Why recommend Joseph de Maistre to the reader's attention? Interest in his work is in effect far from being incontestable. When he treats the French Revolution, a theme that will haunt him all his life, he reveals himself to be a mediocre historian. It matters little to him to know how the Old Regime could have engendered the catastrophe by which it was going to fall, the historian's primordial concern—and which will be the concern of the Doctrinaires, of Tocqueville, and of liberal thought: to anchor the Revolution in the history of France—all that is totally foreign to him. The ambiguous image of a development in which mixed factors interpenetrated each other did not stimulate his mind, which was tempted by the mirage of a basically Manichean opposition between the representation of the monarchical order of divine right and revolutionary Satanism."

⁵⁵ Dale K. Van Kley, *The Religious Origins of the French Revolution*.

⁵⁶ See Jean Tulard's Introduction to the *Considérations sur la France* (Paris, 1980), 24 and Peter Davies, *The Extreme Right in France, 1789 to the Present: From De Maistre to Le Pen* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 32–3.

State. For many contemporaries, the Revolution was seen above all as an attack on religion, as the works of William Doyle⁵⁷ and Darrin M. McMahon⁵⁸ have demonstrated. As Tocqueville acknowledged—although disagreeing with the counter-revolutionary thesis—it was impossible to destroy the ancient society and, at the same time, keep an institution like the Catholic Church intact, considering that it had mingled itself with feudal institutions and its politics.⁵⁹

Thus we could agree partially with Boffa's judgement, but without committing the injustice of attributing to Maistre an insufficiency in doing something that he, definitively, did not intend to do, that is, to write a *history* of the Revolution.

As has been noticed by Paul Beik,⁶⁰ Stéphane Rials,⁶¹ Jean-Louis Darcel,⁶² Jean-Yves Pranchère, Michel Winock,⁶³ Pierre Glaudes⁶⁴ and also Boffa in the *Dictionnaire de la révolution française*, what distinguishes the *Considérations* from most counter-revolutionary literature is precisely the fact that it subsumed the revolutionary phenomenon in a metaphysical plan.⁶⁵ Describing the Revolution as a miracle, as Pranchère observes, "Maistre does not claim that it was devoid of causes, nor that it impossible to reconstitute the causal chain that organized it in its course; it maintained, more profoundly that the Revolution cannot be understood apart from the causes *that are effectively its own*."⁶⁶

Furthermore, we can identify the *Considérations* as an essay in modern social science, through an appeal to history as "experimental

⁵⁷ William Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution* (1989) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 136–44.

⁵⁸ Darrin M. McMahon, *Enemies of the Enlightenment: The French Counter-Enlightenment and the Making of the Modernity* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 71–83.

⁵⁹ Alexis de Tocqueville, *L'ancien régime et la révolution*, 1: 2 and 2: 1.

⁶⁰ Beik, *The French Revolution Seen From the Right*, 65.

⁶¹ Stéphane Rials, "Lecture de Joseph de Maistre," in *Révolution et contre-révolution au XIX^e siècle*, ed. Stéphane Rials (Paris: Albatros and Diffusion-Université-Culture, 1987), 30.

⁶² Jean-Louis Darcel, Introduction to Maistre, *Écrits sur la Révolution* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 23.

⁶³ Winock, "L'héritage contre-révolutionnaire," in *Histoire de l'extrême droite en France*, 32.

⁶⁴ Pierre Glaudes, *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 185–6.

⁶⁵ Massimo Boffa, "Maistre," in *Dictionnaire critique de la révolution française*.

⁶⁶ Jean-Yves Pranchère, *L'autorité contre les Lumières: La philosophie de Joseph de Maistre* (Geneva: Droz, 2004), 393.

politics,” as Paul Beik,⁶⁷ Sheldon Wollin,⁶⁸ and, more recently, Carolina Armenteros,⁶⁹ have underlined.

In this way, the *Considérations* reassumed its position as a classic of conservatism, as its presence in many books and dictionaries, chiefly in those published on the occasion of the Revolution’s Bicentenary (1989), proved.⁷⁰

George Steiner attributed to Maistre the merit of having synthesized with clarity, in a “prose of the most luminous and lapidary quality,” the “metaphysical-theological axioms inherent in any fundamental repudiation of the French Revolution.”⁷¹

Jack Hayward described Maistre as a ‘truculent free-thinker’ who elaborated the most ‘devastating’ intellectual reaction against the French Revolution,⁷² while William Doyle underlined the fact that the *Considérations* brought to life an entire political perspective of the right which would be hegemonic in many governments of the nineteenth century, especially for those regimes that saw in religion’s defense, the control of opinion, and in prohibition of universal suffrage the best ways of sustaining themselves.⁷³ With the help of Maistre’s Thermidorian pamphlet, Georges Gusdorf stressed the failure of the ten-year long French revolutionary process (1789–1799) to achieve a constitutional form of

⁶⁷ Paul Beik, *The French Revolution Seen from the Right*, 66.

⁶⁸ Sheldon S. Wolin, *Politics and Vision. Continuity and Innovation in Western Political Thought* (1960) (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 322–3.

⁶⁹ Carolina Armenteros, “From Human Nature to Normal Humanity: Joseph de Maistre, Rousseau and the Origins of Moral Statistics,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 68, 1 (2007): 128.

⁷⁰ Alice Gérard, *A Revolução Francesa. Mitos e interpretações*. (1970) trans. Sérgio Joaquim de Almeida. (São Paulo, 1999); Denis Huisman, ed., *Dictionnaire des philosophes* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1984), 2: 1713–15; *Dictionnaire critique de la Révolution française*; Pierre Manent, “Joseph de Maistre,” in François Chatelet, Olivier Duhamel and Evelyne Pisier, eds., *Dictionnaire des oeuvres politiques*. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1986); Michel Vovelle, ed., *França Revolucionária (1789–1799)*, trans. Denise Bottman. (São Paulo, 1989); Bruno Bongiovanni and Luciano Guerri, ed., *L'albero della Rivoluzione. Le interpretazioni della Rivoluzione francese* (Turin: Einaudi, 1989); M. Prélôt and G. Lescuyer, *Histoire des idées politiques* (Paris: Dalloz, 1992), 632–8; George Steiner, “Aspects of Counter-revolution,” in *The Permanent Revolution: The French Revolution and its Legacy 1789–1989*, ed. Geoffrey Best (London: Fontana, 1988); and Gérard Gengembre, *La contre-révolution ou l'histoire désespérante*.

⁷¹ George Steiner, “Aspects of Counter-revolution,” 144.

⁷² Jack Hayward, *After the French Revolution*, 44.

⁷³ Doyle, *The Oxford History of the French Revolution*, 423.

government.⁷⁴ In turn, a historian of economic thinking, Albert O. Hirschman, selected passages from the *Considérations* in order to illustrate the use made by modern conservative politicians of the rhetoric of perversity.⁷⁵

In his introduction to the *Considérations* (1988), Pierre Manent highlighted the pioneering character of the pamphlet, which represents the first effort of the Revolution's victims "not to expand its grievances, but to strive for its comprehension," an attempt to catch a glimpse of the future:

For the first time on the continent and in the very language of the revolutionaries, thought did its best to face the radicalism of the Revolution. Burke, certainly, had opened the way magnificently, but Burke was distant from the great theatre, the Revolution had not struck him directly. Joseph de Maistre, within reach of the cannon of the French armies, is the first great *recusant*; more than Burke's *Reflections*, the *Considérations* founded the tradition of reaction, or the counter-revolution, of that current of thought which, instead of critiquing the Revolution for such or such of its measures, or for its "excesses" in general, rejected it entirely, in its principles, as contrary to the very nature of social and moral man.⁷⁶

Moreover, the *Considérations*, as highlighted by François Furet in his posthumous *La Révolution en débat* (1999), refusing to split a 'good' Revolution from the 'bad' as had been done by Benjamin Constant and Mme de Staël, advanced a reading of the Revolution as a 'bloc' which would have a great future in the historiography. In the manner of Burke, Maistre saw in the Enlightenment's revolutionary project, that is, the ambition of rebuild society through abstract individual reason, as the cause of the political instability of successive revolutionary governments and the Terror: "No doubt the French Revolution has lasted long enough to go through several phases; nevertheless, its general character has never varied, and from its birth there was evidence of what it would become." (*Considérations*, chap. IV).

From this brief overview of the historiography of the French Revolution, we can conclude that the Maistrean interpretation of the phenomenon is the only one, among those written in the French language during the Revolution and against it, which has not fallen into oblivion, being unceasingly read, reedited, and translated into many languages.

⁷⁴ Georges Gusdorf, *As Revoluções da França e da América: A violência e a sabedoria* (1988), trans. Henrique Mesquita (Rio de Janeiro, 1993). See especially 273–8.

⁷⁵ Albert O. Hirschman, *The Rhetoric of Reaction: Perversity, Futility, Jeopardy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1991).

⁷⁶ Manent, Introduction to *Considérations sur la France* (Paris: Complexe, 2006), vii.

CONCLUSION

Carolina Armenteros

In attempting to preserve religious tradition, Maistre revolutionized it. Influenced by late eighteenth-century French Christian apologetics and by the anthropocentric cults of the French Revolution,¹ he insisted that religion should contribute not only to God's glory, but also to the improvement of life in the world.² These were justifications quite different from those that had supported religion during the Middle Ages and much of modernity, arguments borrowed from the radical Enlightenment, and especially from its suggestion that worldly utility is the main, if not the only, criterion of moral value.³ Indeed Maistre's intellectual originality derives largely from the fact that he responded enthusiastically to the utilitarian demands that the radical Enlightenment and the Revolution made of religion in the realm of politics. It was a fruitful response. As the papers collected in this volume show, thinkers across Europe and the political spectrum used Maistre's refashioning of the politics-religion rapport to address similar problems in their own time.

Assessing Maistre's importance as a thinker requires ceasing to think of him primarily as the defendant of a political position. This is, firstly, because Maistre was always a political maverick, even among the monarchs and conservatives of his day. As a Catholic and a foreigner in Russia, he fit oddly in the political environment of the nation where he produced most of his works. The Russian government he had served eventually expelled him for being an advocate of the Jesuits and for converting Russian nobles to Catholicism. Nor was he an archetype of

¹ See Albert Mathiez, *La théophilanthropie et le culte décadaire, 1796–1801. Essai sur l'histoire religieuse de la révolution* (Geneva: Slatkine, 1975).

² On the "utilitarian turn" in French Christian apologetics during the eighteenth century, see "Utility Triumphs" in William R. Everdell, *Christian Apologetics in France, 1730–1790: The Roots of Romantic Religion* (Lewinston and Queenston: Edwin Mellen, 1987), 109–43, as well as Robert R. Palmer, *Catholics and Unbelievers in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939).

³ On the Counter-Enlightenment's adoption of utilitarianism, see Jeffrey Burson, *The Rise and Fall of Theological Enlightenment* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 306–7.

French conservatism. Unlike many of the *ultras*—the French political party whose sympathies were most consonant with his own—and notably unlike Chateaubriand, he was uncommitted to restoring the feudal society of the old regime. For him, the Revolution had transformed European society and politics in ways that could not be undone, and that in fact had to be welcomed as a Providential decree. Also, unlike most of the *ultras*, Maistre was an ultramontane. This did not have the straightforward political implications that might at first appear. After all, ultramontanism split and weakened the French right during the Restoration,⁴ causing indirectly the Revolution of 1830.

Nor did Maistre's politics become easier to categorise posthumously. The papers in this volume, thematically varied as they are, testify that he has continued to engage thinkers throughout Europe thanks to the unique and versatile ways in which he theorized the encounter between modernity and tradition, especially religious tradition.

I

One result of the conviction that Maistre begot fascism was Robert Triomphe's massive *doctorat d'état* thesis on Maistre, which founded current Maistrian studies, though for unusual reasons. As Jean-Louis Darcel suggests in his "Memento," Triomphe's monumentally erudite work was driven by resentment. His text amazes still because of the hatred it conveys, because of its phantasmagorical account of a materialistic cynic whose every word and action, private and public, written and spoken, was a lie. The account was all the more memorable in that it rested on an impressive wealth of information on Maistre such as had never before been gathered, and that, over half a century after its publication, remains a reference on the subject.

But the price of loathing was historical distortion, and the literary birth of an improbably Machiavellian monster. Jean-Louis Darcel, Jean Rebotton, and Richard A. Lebrun responded to the ensuing debate by patiently verifying the Maistrian sources and documents that Triomphe had not been able to access, by cultivating a diversity of points of view, and by avoiding ideological approaches. New Maistrian studies also adopted the paradigm of ideas in context, as scholars strove to

⁴ Stanley Mellon, *The Political Uses of History: A Study of Historians in the French Restoration* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1958).

understand Maistre as a product of his times, to restore him to the realm of the historically comprehensible. The result of the work they began is that sources on Maistre—those he composed himself, those he used for his work and those that his family, friends and acquaintances provided on him—are better ordered and catalogued than those for many contemporary thinkers, and that the circumstances of his life and writing career are comparatively well known.

The portrait of Maistre that emerges from this exercise is that of a man fashioned by a Christian education centred on duty who was, in that respect, like nearly everybody else. One advantage of painstaking historicisation is that it makes it difficult—if not impossible—to imagine giants of evil whose philosophy exceeds the bounds of historical explanation. Another advantage is that it liberates thinkers from political straight-jackets. It demonstrates, concretely, that even political thought is determined by non-political factors, and that it is not always reducible to the political debates for which it was devised.

II

Cyprian Blamires historicises when arguing that Isaiah Berlin mistook Maistre as a progenitor of fascism's paranoid world (see Chapter 1). Unlike the hyper-nationalist, revolutionary fascists, Maistre urged respect for existing institutions and opposed all revolutionary ideologies—even if his own thought, especially on questions of religion, was in itself deeply revolutionary (see Introduction). As an ultramontanist critic of national forms of Christianity, Maistre also harboured no love for nationalism. Nor was his focus on bloodshed and violence geared toward glorifying either in the manner of his fascist descendants. Quite the contrary: Maistre reflected on violence for the sole purpose of channeling and minimizing it. Like the fascists, he may have been moved by fear; but this emotion, in its form and content, bore little resemblance to theirs. Yes, Maistre harboured a quasi-paranoid obsession with “justice and the fixing of blame”⁵: the Revolution left this highly sensitive and passionate personality emotionally wrecked, and memories of this experience pervade his thought. Yet Maistre's fear sprang from spiritual anxiety, from the despair that

⁵ John Farrell, *Paranoia and Modernity: Cervantes to Rousseau* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 16.

God's punishment was too terrible for a frail humanity to bear—a feeling quite alien to fascist sentiment. Moreover, the obverse of this feeling—the Providentialist trust that dictates self-abandonment to God's will—preserved him from the drive to absolute control that is paranoia's inevitable corollary, and fascism's defining feature.

Berlin was right, however, to discern Maistre's ultra-modernity. This herald of conservatism wanted to defend tradition with revolutionary means that are rarely commented upon, but that Berlin had the insight to detect immediately. His mistake was to assume that the posterity of political theories is politically stable, to believe that, because Maistre represented the right of his own time, he somehow belonged essentially, and only, to the right of Berlin's own. The opposite was instead the case: Maistre exited political genealogies with panache and ease, and he did so because he was intent on revolutionizing *tradition*, on re-inventing institutions in the interests of conserving them. Never a reactionary in historical matters, he saw an ideal future, ordained by Providence and undesigned by humans, growing imperceptibly out of the present, rather than out of the debris of an ancient order. This is something very different from fascism's aspiration to radical renewal. Simultaneously, though, for all his protestations, Maistre's thought was inherently revolutionary. In seeking to render religion politically useful, he inevitably re-forged it as Revolution's servant. The Christianity of *Du pape* is more the fragile agent of deliberate, premeditated, accelerated change, than the deeply rooted plant that Providence protects, and that grows, slowly and imperceptibly, in the shadows and across the centuries. Yet if Maistre's revolutionism recalled the fascists, his *goal*—to defend religious, moral, and political tradition—could not have differed more from theirs.

Tonatiuh Useche Sandoval shows one of the major ways in which Maistre revolutionized religion (see Chapter 2). *Du pape* argued unprecedentedly that European monarchy was the popes' invention, a way of limiting government power without endangering state sovereignty. Though Europe's cultural origins lay among unruly barbarians who legated to their descendants a taste for rebellion and unstable mores, the popes managed to maintain the political balance they had created for a thousand years. They kept sovereigns in check, binding them with a moral law that prevented them both from becoming despots, and from being killed by their subjects—as often happened in the Orient. Counter to modern political wisdom, which often upholds fear as the primary political passion, the popes were politically successful

because their Christian spiritual sovereignty, unlike its temporal counterparts, was not based on the power over life and death. It had nothing to do with the capacity to kill without committing homicide, or celebrating sacrifice, with the violent *manus* of Roman law that appropriates its prey without just recourse, and that Maistre believed had spawned all temporal sovereignties—even that of Europe’s Christian monarchs, who ultimately purchased, like all the others, legitimacy with survival. Rather, papal sovereignty was explained by a tradition of thought that had begun with Plato and culminated in Kant.⁶ According to it, sovereignty rested not on brute power, but on moral authority. It depended not on the “permission to do evil with impunity,” as Maistre wrote regarding kings;⁷ but on the capacity to exercise reason, act justly, and abstain from violence. Old and ascetic, Maistre’s popes were spiritual sovereigns who differed from temporal kings in that they had achieved—or were more likely to have achieved—freedom from the passions. Their authority in turn derived from their capacity to endow societies with this freedom—the Christian kind that made Europe unique.

III

As Kevin Erwin suggests, Maistrian historicism is a kind of retro-revolution. For Barbey d’Aurevilly (see Chapter 3), Maistre was the “prophet of the past,” an elect of Providence whose profound knowledge of history enabled him to predict the future and discern the deleterious aspects of the present. The world Barbey saw was sick with technocratic progressivism and boundless faith in science, with “that need to throw oneself forward because one is badly where one is.”⁸ In the age of progress, historiography and prophecy no longer grew organically, as Maistre and his fellow conservatives suggested they should. They became, instead, technologies of history, deliberate ways of exiting the present, of consulting transcendence in order to divert the course of time. The irony was that, though Barbey may not have realized it, the

⁶ Maistre theorized sovereignty in the decisionist and Platonic terms discussed by Giorgio Agamben in *Homo sacer: Sovereign Power and Naked Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

⁷ Maistre, *De la souveraineté du peuple: Un anti-contrat social*, ed. Jean-Louis Darcel (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1992), 179.

⁸ Barbey d’Aurevilly, *Les prophètes du passé* (Paris: Louis Hervé, 1851), 47.

hyper-historicism that he borrowed from Maistre and turned into a heuristic paradigm perpetuated the spirit of progress. Like the technocrats it denounced, Aurevillian history aspired to manage time. The difference was that it knew it could not do this both consciously and effectively. For Barbey's true prophets do not wish to know the future. Rather, their prophecy emanates from their virtue.⁹

Maistre's historical mentality awoke German counter-revolutionaries to the idea of Europe as a historical and religious entity. As Raphaël Cahen demonstrates in Chapter 4, reading *Du pape* fired Friedrich von Gentz's enthusiasm. It coincided with a time in his life when, as he collaborated with Catholic conservatives and toyed with Catholicism without professing it, his conservatism developed in historical and religious directions. Like Maistre, Gentz—who in his youth had gone so far as to write of insurrection as a “sacred duty”—was not a reactionary in the sense that he had no desire to rewind time, to return to an old regime that existed only in nostalgic dreams. Nor was his conservatism born out of a systematic opposition to change. In fact, Gentz found *Du pape* fascinating because it provided a unique means to conduct revolutions legally, combining conservatism with reform. The book was additionally compelling as a historical proposition. It revealed that Christianity was the religion of liberty without rebellion, the gentle yoke on the mutinous people of a continent destined for restlessness. Claude-Henri de Saint-Simon (1760–1825) and his descendants drew on this insight to fashion the new religions that they hoped would reconcile Europe and the world. Though more politically oriented and less theoretically inclined, Gentz and his fellow German counter-revolutionaries similarly discovered, in *Du pape*, the services that religion could render to a nascent European union.

Simultaneously, Maistrian thought was contributing to the “turn right” and religious politics of Gentz's contemporary compatriots, the German Romantics, who, barred from engaging in open political debate, used the family as a foil to discuss monarchy and Revolution. Adrian Daub recounts how their models of the family progressed toward reaction as Novalis, Schlegel, and Baader drew inspiration from the familial models of the Francophone Counter-revolution (see Chapter 5). Divinely pre-ordained, the Maistrian and Bonaldian family was the irreducible foundation of an essentially sociable humanity

⁹ *Ibid.*, 44 (8).

dependent on a sovereign, the idealized antithesis of the Rousseauian family, animalistic and demoralized.

As the German Romantics aged and sought to prevent Revolution, they sympathized increasingly with this counter-revolutionary model of a re-moralized and re-sacralized family. They sought thereby to do away with the Enlightenment ideal of atomized, pulverized individuals that had prepared the Revolution they wished to avoid. But German Romantics and Francophone Counter-revolutionaries differed also in crucial respects. Tending to reduce the family to the married couple, the German Romantics emphasized the importance of love, especially erotic love, an emotion that the Francophone conservatives had expelled from their thought for being inherently narcissistic. In addition, a monarch, especially one lacking a parliament (and neither Maistre nor Bonald had much interest in representation) had no use for her subjects' capacity for passion: knowing her own will and exercising it sufficed her. It was a very different matter in regimes founded on popular sovereignty. There, subjects had to constitute themselves as sovereigns. They had to learn, through interpersonal relationships, what their own will was and how to administer it. Of all relationships, marriage was potentially the most useful in this regard, because it was the most intimate, and thus the one where passion could be spent most freely.

In this way, the German Romantics hoped to engender in their country a politics of freedom. But it was not the freedom of the popes. From Maistre and Bonald's perspective, it was its opposite: the kind of freedom that is but despotism disguised.

IV

Coming from a vastly different intellectual world, Walter Benjamin too inherited from Maistre's political theology. Originally, Ryohei Kageura shows how Benjamin's analysis of Baudelaire and the detective novel took up themes that Maistre had introduced in his critique of Francis Bacon (see Chapter 6). Maistrian sociology is usually discussed with reference to *Du pape*, the *Eclaircissement sur les sacrifices*, and the *Essai sur le principe générateur des constitutions politiques*. Kageura shows, however, that some of Maistre's most intriguing claims about modernity—those, at any rate, that drew Baudelaire and Benjamin's attention—were contained in his epistemology and linguistics. Following Maistre indirectly, Benjamin suggested that Bacon's lack of

confidence in logic and syllogism implied the repudiation of language itself, and with it of the only means to create genuine bonds between people.

Distrusting logic likewise intimated replacing language with a technocracy of knowledge. The theological order that Maistre praised had encouraged relatively transparent communal relations based on linguistic exchange. But the modern order that Bacon inaugurated used technology as a means of manipulating and controlling masses of mutually suspicious strangers who were concentrated without cohering. Insightfully, Benjamin realized that the detective novel plays out the struggle between theology and modernity. The criminal lurking in the mass is made possible not only by the original sin on which Maistre and Baudelaire insist, but also by the isolation of people and ideas characteristic of Bacon's silent, technologic world. The detective, for his part, is the reactionary, the theologian, the believer capable of restoring order not only because he knows how to identify the guilty, but also, and much more importantly, because he believes in guilt in the first place. The detective novel is the story of the triumph of reaction and the humanization of the mass through a game of survival between the culpable stranger, and a redeemer whose success depends on the mastery of logic, a belief in good and evil, and the ability to speak.

Baudelaire's world, by contrast, though related to that of the detective novel, is irremediably permeated by sin. The translator of Edgar Allan Poe believed in guilt, but not in the saving power of logic and communication. As for his variety of deliverance, it arose only from the exhaustion of sin. The idea was heterodox, but it originated in Maistre, who had observed that, in taking every vice to its ultimate excesses, in killing every virtue until no good remained, the French Revolution practiced redemption by history. The thundering words of Providence had resounded above France's "convulsions": *Let me show you what you can do without me!* It was a new kind of despair. The Christian mystical tradition had known the "long night of the soul," the total emptiness of God; but not its social and political, modern equivalent. Maistre's theoretical innovation derived from his conviction that Providence was purging France of its passions by allowing it to spend them all, "until the extinction of evil, until the death of death."¹⁰ The argument was

¹⁰ Maistre, *Les soirées de Saint-Pétersbourg*, in *Joseph de Maistre: Oeuvres*, ed. Pierre Glaudes (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2007), 659–61.

bad theology—suggesting that the massive commission of sin could be a necessary step on the road of salvation—but it could make for suggestive politics and history, as Baudelaire and Benjamin readily discerned.

Although Maistre was an authoritarian who saw right submission as a vehicle of the good, he believed also that, to submit willingly, it may first be necessary to live as a hyper-modern being, to exist completely—in Benjaminian terms—as a stranger in the mass, not as a human being who communicates transparently with others, but as an object and a subject whose human interactions are based solely on political games of manipulation and control. In dissolving traditional bonds and destroying relationships of trust, in turning every *citoyen* into a potential traitor, a conspirator, a spy—even worse—a detective-turned-delator, the Jacobin Terror had objectified people *en masse* and turned paranoia into a lifestyle.

Herbert Marcuse, the subject of Michael Kohlhauer's piece, had no interest in Maistrian solutions to the conundrum of modernity (see Chapter 7). Unmoved by the idea of original sin, he dwelt neither on the spending of all passions, nor on the importance of logic and linguistic communication. The counter-revolutionaries attracted him, rather, by their status as debunkers—as those who had theorized the “pathology of authority” that resulted from revolution. Their critiques, he intuited, were applicable not only to the revolutionary times for which they were devised, but to any political order as well. That is why he could publish his essay on Counter-revolution both during the rise of the Nazis, and during the student riots of the 1960s. Most importantly, Kohlhauer suggests, counter-revolutionary thought was useful to Marcuse as a commentary not on revolution, but on revolution-turned-order, the kind of order that Maistre had detected, horrified, at the end of his life, when he realized that the Revolution lived on, camouflaged, in the bosom of the Restoration.¹¹ His historical observations were therefore well equipped to help Marcuse theorise how the absurdities and tragedies deriving from sudden mutations in political authority become established in the social orders they engender—whether these orders are the French Restoration, the Nazi regime, or the bourgeois democracy of the 1960s. For both Maistre and Marcuse, in fact, tradition and modernity turn ceaselessly into each other, and Maistre's

¹¹ Maistre, *Du pape*, 24.

critique of revolution can be applied to even the most tranquil of historical periods.

As Marco Ravera suggests, Maistre's historical understanding of Europe as a land of crisis is likely a major reason why Italian scholars began to read him in earnest only in the second half of the twentieth century (see Chapter 8), when much of European thought became concerned with the explanation and avoidance of violence, and when Europe was finally united as Maistre had dreamed. The primarily economic character of the new unity, though, was very different from the one that the Savoyard had envisaged, and ontologist Piedmont, in particular, has re-read him in the hopes of finding complements and alternatives to the present concord. In a continent and a society where individual alienation is a common experience, Maistre's thought inspires those who wish that the links between persons could be rendered more solid by religion or other shared values. Indeed this has been a major aspect of Maistre's appeal for European thinkers at least since Walter Benjamin reflected on the modern masses.

As the epistolary quarrels between Maistre and Uvarov show (see Chapter 9), Europe's shared intellectual and spiritual heritage was a subject quite close to both men's hearts. Their conversations on such seemingly pacific subjects as the value of Oriental and classical knowledge were dissimulated battles over Europe's essence, and over the extent to which Russia possessed it. To Uvarov, Europe represented criticism and was the cradle of modernity. To Maistre, Europe was, more broadly, the land of freedom and rationality. Freedom, in turn, meant primarily freedom from the passions—of oneself and of the state—a fundamentally monarchical state of mind that Christianity excelled at imparting. Current scholarship has consistently underdiscussed this variety of freedom, possibly because it seems, on the surface, to be scarcely political. Yet in Maistre's work, it animated an ideal of religious and educational autonomy; and in Maistre's life, it had important political repercussions. To some extent, Maistre's expulsion from Russia can be interpreted as an imperial rejection of his idea of European freedom as a variety of autonomy from temporal force. With time, the rejection acquired institutional form in Uvarov's depoliticized educational system managed totally by the state. As I have argued, these circumstances helped to prepare the Revolution of 1917. Even today, however, Maistre and Uvarov's discussions continue to repeat themselves in new versions and contexts. For although questions of religious and cultural identity are now less prominent, others relating to Europe

and Russia's shared political values continue to inform efforts—notably by the EU-Russia Centre—to promote closer ties between the Russian Federation and the European Union.

In the afterword, José Miguel Nanni Soares shows the persistence of Maistre's *Considérations sur la France* (1797) among left and right-wing historicists throughout Europe, who valued Maistre's pamphlet as a piece of historiography with hermeneutical and polemical value. Ironically, the *Considérations* re-enacts continuously the revolutionary conditions to which it responded. Having turned history into the measure of politics, it has become itself a fragment of the past that scholars use in the present to argue about the future. It has turned, in short, into the tool of historiography-as-revolution.

V

The essays in this volume suggest that Maistre has been significant to European readers of all stripes because he theorized the relationship between religion and revolution, or, more precisely, because he suggested ways in which political modernity could be preserved through a sense of transcendence. Berlin's suggestion that Maistre was a precursor of fascism should therefore be qualified extensively, and put in the perspective of Maistre's extremely varied posterity. Blamires has shown that Maistrian thought was devoid of ideas indispensable to the fascist mentality—revolutionism, nationalism, and the tendency to honour violence. To this argument may be added that, in Spain—the country where Juan Donoso Cortés (1809–53) established Maistre's connection with fascism most solidly—Maistre's posterity was concerned not with violence, but with the concept of authority that Spanish traditionalists hoped would save their country from experiencing its own version of the French Revolution.

Although he was a traditionalist and a supporter of the ancients, Maistre did not wish to do away with modernity. Nor, in fact—despite all his declamations to the contrary—did he hope to do away with revolution. As historical phases that had *lasted*, both modernity and Revolution, destructive though they were, were confirmed by time as God's orders. Caused by human sins, they contributed to perfecting humanity, impelling it to progress morally and physically toward the final stage of history when the universe would return to God. It is this unique and ultimately Pelagian theorization of the historical

interaction between tradition and Revolution that has commanded the attention of European readers throughout the centuries.

In Maistrian thought, Europe is the region of the world that has experienced history most intensely, a land of freedom and insurrection inhabited by peoples with unstable and rebellious temperaments. Historically, it is the product of two major cultural influences. The first is that of the ravaging barbarians, lovers of freedom, those trope figures of Enlightenment historiography from Montesquieu to Hume, who had founded European politics by making kings reign. The second was the influence of Christianity, a religion that promoted free mores by emphasizing the individual's sole moral responsibility before God. In this respect, *Du pape* anticipates, by nearly two centuries, the master argument that John Pocock is currently developing in his multi-volume *Barbarism and Religion* (1999-).

Historically, whether insurrection or freedom prevailed in Europe depended on whether Christian law was obeyed or abandoned. If the former, governed and sovereigns were bound together by moral principles that subjected them without enslaving them. If the latter, the unleashed passions tyrannized individuals and society. Europe's perpetual dilemma was to find a way of living the spirit of innovation and progress that was supposedly unique to it without self-destructing. The dilemma has persisted throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, as the terroristic political tradition that Maistre and his fellow conservatives identified, prophesied and denounced deployed itself further within totalitarian regimes of the right and left. In this historic context, it is little wonder that Maistrian thought has persisted across the political spectrum along with the principles it criticised.

A final thought. In trying to preserve modernity with religion, Maistre sought also to minimize suffering, to serve not only God, monarchs and the aristocracy, but also the common interests of Europeans at large. In this regard, he did not differ from most political theorists of his time. In fact, in the end, his originality lies less in his aims, than in the means he proposed to attain them.

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